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THE SILENT WAR

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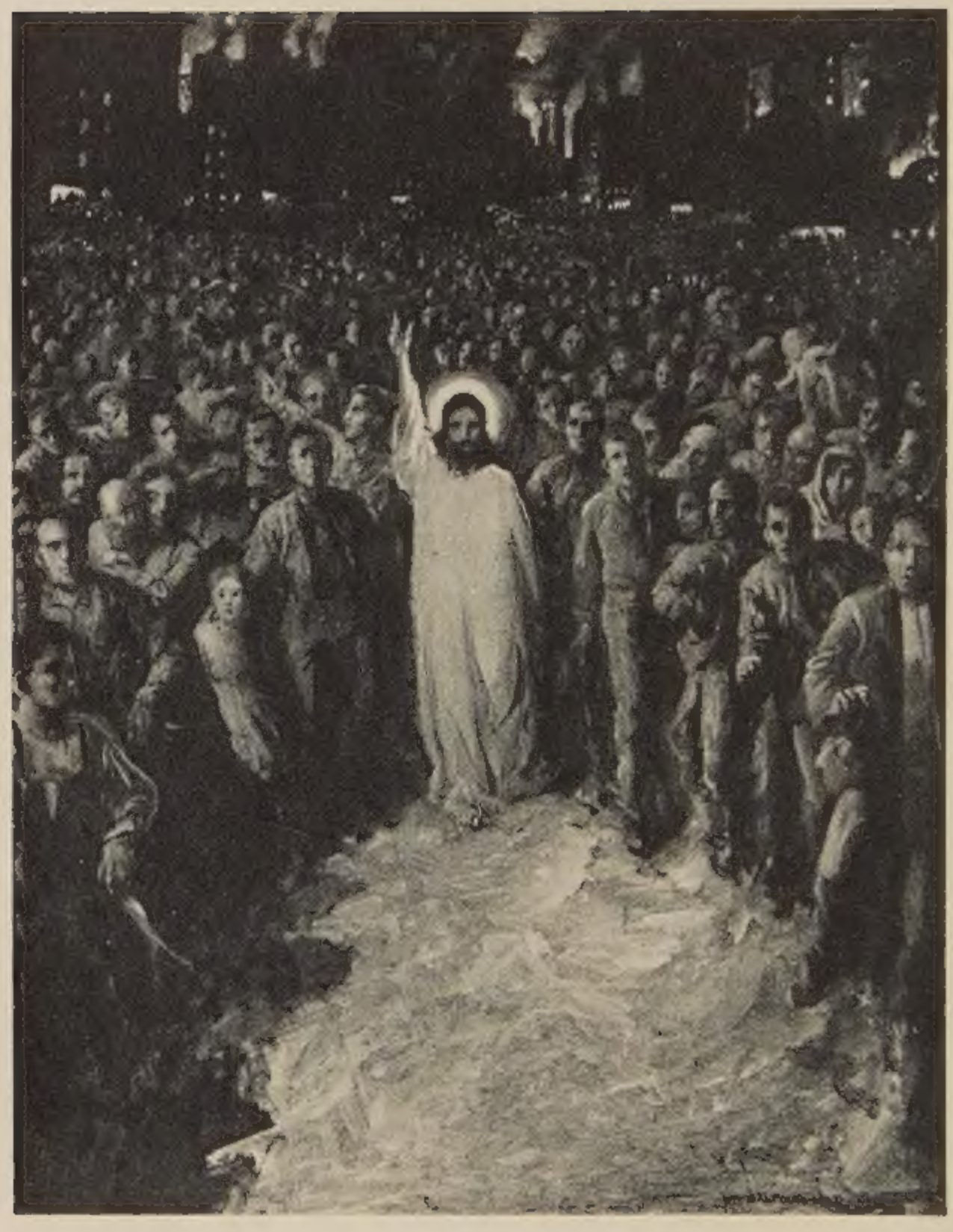

THE GREAT SOCIALIST

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THE SILENT WAR

By

John Ames Mitchell

Author of "Amos Judd," "The Pines of Lory," "Villa Claudia," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILLIAM BALFOUR KER

THE GREGG PRESS
UPPER SADDLE RIVER, N.J.

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AMERICAN NOVELS OF MUCKRAKING, PROPAGANDA, AND SOCIAL PROTEST

The United States has suffered quite a few spells of sickness, if one may judge by the long and varied procession of novels dealing with the ills of its society. As each generation has sought assurances for the social hope that springs eternal in a democracy, muckraking, propagandizing, and advocating reforms have been not only implicit in partisan politics but also germane to literary production. While it has been said that Americans are readier to believe in charlatans than in utopias, there remains a sneaking feeling that maybe Oscar Wilde was right when he remarked: "Progress is the realization of utopias." Some such moral—if indeed moral it be—may be derived from the Gregg series of "American Novels of Muckraking, Propaganda, and Social Protest."

One purpose underlying the selection of the titles in the series is to provide examples of socio-economic novels which are presently out of print but which are nevertheless important in showing the history of the genre, a topic so far treated by historians only sporadically. Most of these works can rarely be found in the original editions; and many were printed on paper which is beginning to shatter. The series should prove a boon to librarians and to scholars who work in the fields of literary history and the social sciences. Its usefulness as supplementary reading for college courses in American studies and social history speaks for itself.

In turning the pages of the novels we begin with the groping 1830's and the fabulous 40's—when, as Emerson put it, every man in New England was running around with a plan for reorganizing society in his vestpocket. And we end with the "Era of the Muckrakers"—when the long-existent fervor to remake the world nearer to the mind's desire became a contagious fever, and phrases were bandied about like "frenzied finance," "conspicuous consumption," "malefactors of great wealth," "how the other half lives" and "the shame of the cities." In this series we find artifacts from the days following the panic of 1837, when Horace Greeley devoted a regular column in his *Tribune* to the kind of "associationism" that overtook Brook Farm; and we come along to the period early in the present century when the "yellow" journalism of Hearst and Pulitzer reached full flower and young Sinclair

183934

Lewis swept the floors of Helicon Hall, the socialist community supported by Upton Sinclair with the profits of *The Jungle*. That was the epoch when the young intellectuals stormed college halls to hear Jack London expound the principles of socialism. In between, we find specimens emanating from the Gilded Age, with the ensuing clamor against business combinations eventuating in the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, and the agricultural depression that aroused Midwestern farmers to "raise less corn and more hell" or to align themselves with the People's Party. Business panics in 1873 and 1893 stirred up the coals, young preachers discovered the social gospel, bewhiskered anarchists were the chief "reds," strikes became for the first time a matter of wide public concern, and the play based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the best money-maker on the stage.

One of the features of the list is a careful selection of works concerned with the Negro. The earliest is *The Slave*, by the historian Richard Hildreth. It was not only the first fully developed antislavery novel, but a pattern-maker for the many subsequent tales presenting the chief character as a light-skinned mulatto. The Russians translated it in the 1950's. Another is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Dred*, a sequel to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and perhaps more cogent propaganda. The idea that the Negro is constitutionally unable to cope with American society is curiously set forth in *Liberia*, by Sarah J. Hale, a staunch Yankee best known for her verses about Mary and her little lamb. Mrs. Hale was propagandizing for solving the slavery problem by returning the Negroes to Africa. Presenting the Southern side, *Aunt Phillis's Cabin*, by Mary H. Eastman, has been chosen from the batch of novels which sought in vain to counter the effect of Mrs. Stowe's world-famed classic of protest. The blasting of Northern prejudice against the Negro after the Civil War is well illustrated in two works: Rebecca Harding Davis's *Waiting for the Verdict*, a title still apt a century after it first appeared, and Albion W. Tourgée's tract for the times *Pactolus Prime*, which vitriolically scores the essential prejudice of white against black and is, apparently, the first American novel dealing with the Negro problem with a setting in Washington, D. C.

Joaquin Miller's *Life Amongst the Modocs* deals with the mistreatment of Indians. Few in number but judiciously chosen for illustrative purposes are stories exposing the white slave traffic–

from the days when the Mann Act was legislated and city slums were being muckraked both in and out of fiction to a degree probably more thorough than is the case even today. Among the other problems considered in these stories are divorce, prisons, and the criminal code, political corruption, pacificism, states rights, the social responsibilities of the churches, the plight of the Jew and the Immigrant, and even medical frauds.

But the theme governing the largest single element in this collection is the business tycoon and the battle between the capitalist power elite and the working class. The range in the picturization of "the typical American figure," as Henry James declared the captain of industry to be, runs quite a gamut in the series, from the romantic treatment in *Sevenoaks*, by the first editor of *Scribner's Magazine*, to the excoriation of corporation machinations by avowed socialists not unacquainted with Karl Marx. The tycoons pilloried range from bankers, real estate promoters, mill owners, and railroad magnates to lumber barons. One might view the development of this theme in the amazing profusion of fictional examples as a symbol of the growing unrest precipitated in a traditionally agrarian society bewildered by its confrontation with huge industrial corporations and big cities. But possibly it proves no more than the homely wisdom distilled into the humorist's wisecrack: "We have met the enemy and the enemy is us!"

PROFESSOR CLARENCE GOHDES
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina

September, 1968

JOHN AMES MITCHELL

John Ames Mitchell was born in New York City in 1845. He began to show a talent for drawing while a student at the Phillips Exeter Academy, and after attending Harvard, studied architecture in Boston, and at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. After becoming adept at the new techniques of black-and-white etching, he returned to New York and used a small legacy to found *Life*, a satirical weekly which was to be "of higher artistic and literary merit" than its competitors, *Puck* and *Judge*. Mitchell contributed cartoons and editorials, and the brilliant Edward S. Martin was hired as literary editor. Francis Gilbert Attwood of the *Harvard Lampoon*, Oliver Herford, and Charles Dana Gibson joined the staff, and *Life* soon attained a wide readership, as well as a reputation for excellent book reviews and uncompromising editorials – a reputation which lasted until its purchase by Time, Inc. in 1936. Mitchell's *Life* was a crusading magazine which never missed an opportunity to attack John D. Rockefeller, Sr., J. P. Morgan, Jr., and the Hearst yellow press. Sued repeatedly for libel, and upon one occasion threatened with physical violence, Mitchell continued to attack the giant vested interests of the day. He also fulminated against some rather Lilliputian adversaries such as vivisectionists, European fortune-hunters, and the wearers of the hobble skirt ("Don't cry Tommy; it's only a woman.") *Life* was the first publication to advocate fresh-air camps for slum children, and it carried on a long campaign against Prohibition.

About 1895, Mitchell began to delegate his editorial and artistic responsibilities, and to devote his time to the writing of fiction. Like his articles and cartoons in *Life*, his novels were topical, and extremely popular. The best-known are *Dr. Thorne's Idea*, a psychiatric study of hereditary criminality; *Pandora's Box*, the charming story of a love affair between an American architect and an aristocratic English girl, and *The Silent War*.

The December 15, 1906, issue of *Charities and Commons*, a leading left-wing review, announced the following as the most significant "socialist novels" of the day: H. G. Wells, *In The*

Days of the Comet, Richard Whiting, *Ring in the New*, Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, Bart Kennedy, *Slavery*; Ernest Poole, *The Voice of the Streets*, and *The Silent War*. But, as Walter Rideout points out in *The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954*, Mitchell's inclusion in this list is based on a false premise. For Mitchell states quite clearly in his Preface that his work is a *caveat*, an admonition aimed at "the reveller in the golden harvest, dazzled by his own prosperity and ignoring the ravenous faces that watch him from barren fields. . .the hungry toilers among the shadows in the malodorous places." This is protest fiction of the most urgent sort, and its pictures of the degradation and wretchedness of the proletariat are as vivid as, if less detailed than any found in the stories of Upton Sinclair or of Jack London. But unlike these muckraking men of impoverished and obscure origins, the Editor of *Life* does not write from a radical point of view. He does not in any way suggest a change of political forms as a solution to contemporary social ills. There is a horror of revolution and its aftermath throughout the novel. Violent social upheaval is a punishment visited upon those who refuse to share the wealth with their less fortunate brothers, a judgment visited upon the wicked, not by God, but by History.

The plot of this somber, brutal tale centers about an incipient revolt against a cynical, Sybaritic plutocracy. Unlike the truly socialist or proletarian novel, Mitchell's hero is not a labor organizer or a girl from the slums, but an intelligent, decent man of wealth who has the sense to realize that not only he, but society itself will be destroyed if things continue as they are. The present rulers must immediately concede their power to more responsible administrators. Catastrophe is narrowly avoided through intelligent compromise, but the power remains with the middle class, as before. *The Silent War* is an important work in the history of protest fiction, an affirmation of the ability of the American constitutional, middle-class democracy to deal with dangerous internal problems without bloodshed.

Upper Saddle River, N. J.
October, 1968

F. C. S.

DEDICATION

AS THE ostrich who buries his head in the yellow sand for too long a period ceases to be an authority on events about him, so the reveller in the golden harvest, dazzled by his own prosperity and ignoring the ravenous faces that watch him from barren fields, may lose the keen edge of his perception.

Eyes too reverently fixed, and for too long a period, upon the glories of the treasure house discern but vaguely the hungry toilers among the shadows—in the malodorous places.

Occasional mutterings from the owners of empty stomachs, from the fathers of fading children, from the overworked and the unemployed, make discordant and unwelcome music for cultivated ears. Sounds of this kind, as is natural, annoy the more comfortable people, who continue to expound the law of the Survival of the Fittest.

To these happy philosophers this brief tale is dedicated.

MODERN life has no more tragical figure than the gaunt, hungry laborer wandering about the crowded centers of industry and wealth, begging in vain for permission to share in that industry and to contribute to that wealth; asking, in return, not the comforts and luxuries of civilized life, but the rough food and shelter for himself and family which would be practically secured to him in the rudest form of savage society.—*John Hobson.*

ILLUSTRATIONS

By

William Balfour Ker

THE GREAT SOCIALIST
Frontispiece
WHEN EXTREMES MEET
FROM THE DEPTHS
THE MODERN SAMSON

Some said, "John, print it," others said, "Not so,"
Some said, "It might do good," others said, "No."

—*Bunyan's Apology for His Book.*

THE SILENT WAR

I

In human societies, extremes of wealth and poverty are chief sources of evil.—*Aristotle.*

IN THE gloom of a September night two silent figures—a man and a girl of ten—moved wearily, hand in hand, along a Massachusetts highway. Behind them, partly hidden by the trees and spires of Cambridge, a full, unclouded moon was slowly rising.

The man, in sympathy with the shorter legs beside him, walked slowly. His thoughts were somber. Memories of a degrading past pursued him. The future loomed darker yet. Was liberty, so long awaited, to prove more galling than prison life? What joys could freedom bring with the convict's brand and the mark of Cain?

The soft beauty of the night, the heavenly calm that rested upon this moonlit earth, bore no relation to his own estate, present or future. But the child beside him must not be forgotten. For her he must ignore the odds and keep up the fight.

The Silent War

From a near-by orchard came an odor of apples. He heard the voices of distant frogs, those nocturnal minstrels whose intermittent strains, whether lullaby or serenade, dirge or pæan, are always a fit accompaniment to human grief. And these melancholy voices, with the stillness of the night – for the hour was late—accorded with his own communings.

The girl at his side, however, knew no bitterness. At present, though somewhat weary, she was content. She found amusement in the two elongated shadows that preceded her father and herself along the highway. Besides, she was very happy in having this father to herself again—and away from the "horrid place." Just at present she entertained herself by singing in a low voice a little ballad, taught her by her mother, now dead. Over and again she sang it, because she knew no other.

Still holding her father's hand, she stopped and turned about.

"Just look, father! What a red moon! And how near it looks!"

"Yes, very near."

"And how big and round and splendid!"

"Yes, splendid."

"You would really think," continued the girl,

"that it was right in the town of Cambridge, among the college buildings, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, it seems so."

As they stood, looking backward, the tones of a bell in one of the distant towers came faintly to their ears. The girl counted aloud.

"Eleven o'clock, wasn't it?"

"Yes, eleven o'clock."

"That's late, isn't it?"

"Very late."

Again to the westward they started on. Passing a house, very white in the moonlight, where a group of people were seated upon the steps, talking and laughing, the girl once more broke the silence.

"How much farther do we go to-night, pa?"

"I don't know, Catherine. It all depends on what we find. Are you tired?"

"Oh, no! I didn't ask because I was tired." And she smiled as she looked up and tried to see his face in the darkness. He also smiled and pressed the small hand in his own. But he was not deceived, for the little feet beside him had tramped several miles since noon.

"It shall not be far. As soon as we come to a nice, comfortable shed or safe piazza, we will turn in."

"If there's no dog."

"True; we can do without dogs."

"A nice barn, with lots of hay, would be good, too, wouldn't it?"

"Nothing better."

Here and there a light in a chamber window would be suddenly extinguished; which notice of going to bed by those who had beds to go to caused the homeless pedestrians a fuller realization of their own exclusion. For them, the outer darkness.

While the man walked on in gloomy silence, the child kept singing, at intervals, and in a low voice, her one little song. At a place in the road where no houses were in sight, with open fields on one side and high maples on the other, they heard singing in front of them. It was a man's voice. Full toned, yet half suppressed, it came clearly toward them on the silent air. Clutching her father's hand more tightly, the girl halted with an exclamation of wonder.

"Why, father!" she whispered. "That's mother's song!"

The man stopped, turning an ear in that direction.

"So it is!"

"But, pa! Where did he get it? Nobody knew it except her and me."

Both stood and listened. It was an old song,

rarely sung, remembered by few. This pedestrian sang it well. So well that the father who knew it only from the lips of his wife, and now from his daughter, was moved. He raised his face to the sky and stood listening with closed eyes. The girl pressed closer to his side.

Out in the moonlight, along the highway, the man was coming nearer, his face upturned, swinging in one hand a straw hat. With his gray clothes, he seemed, by the clear, white light of the moon, a luminous object. In a baritone voice of agreeable quality he was singing his song. But at sight of the two figures in his path he stopped, in the middle of a note. In approaching, he acknowledged their presence with a slight inclination and with a movement of the hand that held the hat. As he passed them, the girl with an impulsive squeeze of her father's hand looked up into his face and whispered, hurriedly:

"May I ask him where he got our song? May I?"

"Why, yes, if you want to."

Running after the singer, now again in the moonlight, away from the shadow of the maples, she called:

"Mister!"

The young man stopped and turned about.

"Mister, will you please tell us how—where—you learned the song?"

"The song?"

"Yes, sir."

"The song I was just trying to sing?"

"Yes, sir."

"In Charlestown, just the other day."

"Charlestown? Near the prison?"

"Yes."

"Who was singing it?"

"Well, really, I couldn't say. I was walking along the street at the time. It was a girl's voice, at the open window of a house."

Here the father came forward slowly. "Don't bother the gentleman with too many questions, Catherine." Then, to the young man, "My daughter never heard the song except from her own mother, and she doesn't realize that it may be common property."

"I never heard it before, either," said the youth. "It is entirely new to me; a quaint little air, and it has been running in my head ever since. But," with a slight laugh, "as you saw—or rather heard—just now, I can't quite hold on to it."

"Oh! you sang it very well!" exclaimed the girl, "all except in one place—two places."

"Do you sing it yourself?"

"Yes, sir." And she added shyly, "You have already heard me do it."

"I have?"

"Yes, sir. When you heard it in Charlestown, was it from the second story window of a little brick house opposite one corner of the prison?"

The young man nodded. "Yes, exactly."

"With geraniums on the window sill?"

"Yes."

"That was my window, where I lived. Wasn't it, pa?"

"Yes, that was your window, and very likely it was you the gentleman heard." But as he spoke he took a backward step to end the interview.

"Don't go yet!" the youth exclaimed with some eagerness. "Please wait a minute, sir. If she will sing it again I should be ever so much obliged. Just once. It is a fascinating song, and there is one part I can't remember to save my soul."

Then, stepping nearer and peering down into the girl's face, he said:

"Please do."

It was an interesting pair of eyes that looked up at him, in the uncertain light. The brows and lashes seemed very black, delicately but clearly marked. One-half the face, however, the side away from the moon, was in deepest obscurity,

giving the effect of a youthful Madonna—a portrait by an old master, shadowy and ideal. And probably from its being a child's face, it seemed preternaturally solemn—and wise.

She looked up at her father.

"Yes," he said. "Sing it if you wish."

Taking a few steps backward, for a proper distance between herself and her audience, she began.

In a voice that was pleasant, but in no way unusual, she sang simply, without striving for effects. The song itself, which had so captivated the young man, was a curious, old-fashioned, sentimental little ditty—of a sad heart trying to be jolly. The words were unimportant—an old English song of a maiden who awaits with impatience and misgiving the return of her soldier lover. There being but two verses, it was soon ended.

"Thank you! Thank you!" said the youth. "It's a fine little song, and you do it splendidly. Those notes at the end of the verses—with the turn you give to them—are what I couldn't get. This is the way, isn't it?" and he sang it himself. "That's it, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, that is it."

"Thank you. I am *very* much obliged. Now,

this time I shall never forget it. But where did you pick it up?"

"My mother used to sing it."

From the tone of this reply the youth guessed the mother to be dead. He bowed his head slightly, as one who hears bad news—and with sympathy. In a lower voice he said, "Well, I thank you very much. Is there nothing I can do to show my gratitude?" Then, turning to the father, "We cannot see very well in this light to whom we are talking, but if I can be of any service, sir, to you or your daughter, I wish you would tell me."

There was a silence. The man retreated a step, stroked his chin and seemed undecided. But the girl seized his hand. "Oh, father! Tell him!"

Still the man hesitated.

"Tell him, father! Tell him everything. I know he is good, and will help us."

The young man moved nearer. "Please do it, sir. You can trust me."

"Yes, pa; tell him."

The father looked down, then straightened up. "Well, sir, I will tell you. But it is for her sake, not mine. In the first place I have not a cent in my pocket. But" -quickly raising a hand as if to ward off pity—"I am not a beggar."

"And it's all my fault!" said the girl. "I lost it. We had eleven dollars and sixty cents this morning."

The young man had taken a wad of bills from his waistcoat pocket. "How much do you need?"

But the older man again raised his hand. "Wait till I tell you the rest."

The youth laughed. "Nothing you can tell will make the slightest difference. Nothing you can say will lessen the value of my music lesson. How much do you need?"

"Oh, yes, it can! Perhaps I know you better than you know yourself. I am an ex-convict. Yesterday I was discharged from State's prison after a three-years term."

Involuntarily the youth lowered his hand. But he checked a backward movement, and held his ground.

The ex-convict went on. "Nobody trusts me or is going to trust me when once they know it. And I don't blame them. Who employs jail-birds—or trusts them with a key?" And he laughed. But the laugh was not inspiriting.

"What were you in for?"

"Murder."

Again the young man conquered a backward impulse. Instinctively, however, he cast a furtive

glance along the deserted road toward Cambridge. Nowhere did he see a light or a human being. Although neither timid nor at all nervous, the answer was in the nature of a shock. His voice was lower as he began a question.

"Did you—er—did you?"——

"I killed Rufus Dickson."

"Rufus Dickson? It was you who killed Rufus Dickson? Bully for you! 'Twas a mighty good thing. Everybody thought so—and said so."

Impulsively he grasped the man's hand and shook it. "I am glad to know you, sir!"

The ex-convict was evidently surprised—and affected. He merely replied, however, in a constrained voice, "Thank you."

With unmistakable sincerity the youth went on.

"The whole public was with you newspapers and all. Dickson was a human hog. He put his arm around your wife, as I remember, then tried to knock you down for resenting it. But he was dealing with the wrong man that time! Ha! By Jove, sir! Every man who read about it would have done the same thing if he had the pluck— and the strength." Then, in a lower, more serious tone, "You were sentenced to ten years, as I remember. Then it was reduced to six."

"Yes, and I was pardoned out at the end of three."

"That was just a week ago," said the girl.

The father straightened up, as one who gathers his courage. But in a tone more of weariness than resentment, he said, "To stamp you as a convict, however, to blast forever all standing in any community, three days is just as effective as thirty years."

"Oh!—that shouldn't be so!"

"But it is. I have tried it for one week. Even some of my old friends have explained why they can't have me about. One man had to consider his customers; another his nervous wife. Children in Charlestown had already begun to sidle into doorways and around corners when they saw me coming."

"Tough!" exclaimed the youth. "Almighty tough! And unfair."

"Moreover, my appearance gives a final finish to the job. You can't see it now, but by daylight I have the pallor we get in prison." Drawing his hand across his chin he added, with a faint attempt at mirth, "And a four-days stubble makes as perfect a stage villain as you ever saw."

The young man, with a long breath, stroked the top of his head as though smoothing his hair. "Well, if there is anything I can do, I really wish

you would tell me. What are your plans? Where are you bound, now?"

"To Worcester—if I can get there."

"You have no money?"

The man shook his head.

"I lost it," said the girl. "It wasn't pa's fault. We had over eleven dollars this morning."

"You have friends in Worcester?"

"A brother-in-law. He may possibly help me. But if he doesn't, I shan't blame him. He is a poor man with a family, and the family may have the old-fashioned prejudice against—Cain."

In the meantime the young man, who had turned with his back to the moon, for a better light on the wad of money in his hand, was trying to make out the denominations of certain notes. To the girl, watching his movements with the keenest attention, such a fat roll of bills was an amazing sight. She had never seen in one assembly so many dollars. Detaching a note, which he put in his pocket, the youth folded the others as they were before—into a compact wad and thrust them toward the ex-convict. The ex-convict hesitated; then slowly, and with some indecision, put forth a hand. But the money was forced into his palm.

"Take it. It will tide you over. Perhaps you can get a fresh start."

"How much is there here?"

"There were five hundred dollars this morning, but I spent about fifteen and have just taken out five more. So there are four hundred and eighty."

"Four hundred and eighty dollars!"

And the girl also, in an awe-stricken whisper, repeated, "Four hundred and eighty dollars! Oh!"

"But, sir really—I can't take so much as that. I might never repay it. And besides—you know, I—I"——

"That's all right! It's the only way I can show my appreciation of the service you have done the community. And I owe this little girl four hundred and seventy-nine dollars for teaching me that song."

But the maiden, in a very serious tone, exclaimed, "Oh, no, sir! Not so much as that!"

"Besides," said the youth, "I would contribute gladly toward the killing of another Rufus Dickson. I consider you a public benefactor."

"But, really, sir, this is too much."

"Why too much? It will be a help to you, won't it?"

"I should say so! But you are robbing yourself."

"Robbing myself! Let me tell you something—just to ease your mind. I have more money than

is good for me fifty times more than I can spend. I always have been, and probably always shall be, absurdly and criminally rich. It runs in the family. Before I came into the world, a few millions were already lying in wait for me. Whenever a relative dies, another flood pours in. I am swamped in it. Where other fellows have a dollar, I have thousands. There's no end to it—or sense in it. I am not telling you this as a boast, only that you needn't have any feeling about taking whatever I offer. Why, if that little roll were four hundred and eighty thousand dollars, it could never make a moment's difference to me or my family."

The girl looked up at this fairy prince with wide-open eyes. He seemed impossible.

"But," said the father, "you don't know me or anything about me. I may be lying for all you know."

The young man laughed—the careless, hearty laugh of youth. "Oh, I'm not worrying. Even if you were lying, such a convincing performance is worth the money."

"Well, sir, I am really unable to express my gratitude. But please give me your address that I may at least know to whom I am indebted, even if I can never repay."

From a waistcoat pocket, the youth took out a little case. Extracting a card, he held it up before his eye, very near, then further off. The letters, however, were too fine to be legible by the light of the moon.

"Here is my name and address, but don't try to repay me. The providence that distributes money on this planet loves a practical joke. You have nothing. I have ten times more than I can ever hope to spend. If I want to even things up a little I must do it now while I am young. Later on I shall get the leathery heart."

"No. That I don't believe."

"Well, anyway, if you need more money, send me word."

"No, sir, not that; but I shall always remember you and what you have done for me. I shall do my best to pay you back." And carefully he stowed the card in an inner pocket.

"My name," he said, "perhaps you remember?"

"Yes, indeed, I do!"

"But, unlike you, I have no address."

The youth shook hands with the girl. "Good-by, teacher. I thank you very much for the song. Now that I really know it I shall never forget it."

Then he gave his hand to her father, who spoke with obvious emotion. "Good-by, sir. Your

kindness will never be forgotten. You shall hear from me as soon as I have anything to report. I—I—have not words for my thanks."

As the young man strode away, father and daughter, for a moment, stood in silence. The ex-convict looked down at the sudden wealth in his hand, then at the departing youth.

"May God bless you, young man!"

The girl came nearer. "So I say, pa! And I guess He will."

A moment later, as they started on their journey —and with quite different prospects—they heard behind them the song. And this time it was sung correctly.

II

And Mammon wins his way where Seraphs might despair.—*Childe Harold.*

NINETEEN years go by.

On the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House "Aïda." In the boxes the great human comedy.

A dazzling spectacle the vast semicircle of white necks and shoulders, glistening jewels and shimmering gowns. No descendants of kings and princes could wear their gems and coronets - somewhat overdone perhaps in this assemblage with easier confidence than these immediate relatives of the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker.

Such jewels, in other lands, might stand for ancestral acres. Here, they were the unripe fruit of High Finance; the spoils of peace adroitly gathered from countless toilers of the richest nation of the earth. Some of these women had beauty, but few distinction. It has even been

said that among these "social leaders" were many who gave the impression of having hired their jewels for the occasion. One should remember, however, in extenuation of these ladies that their effulgence was purely financial based frankly upon wealth. Too much culture would have disturbed existing harmonies.

In one of the grand tier boxes, behind his wife, his daughter and her attendant youth, sat Mr. David Armstrong with half-closed eyes and lips compressed. Beneath a gray mustache the lines at the corners of his mouth were somewhat deeper than usual. Distinctly unamiable was the expression of his face. There were no signs of sympathy with the tragic love of Rhadames and Aïda, now unfolded before him, upon the moonlit banks of the Nile. In the life upon the stage, in the array of jeweled heads and necks and shoulders to his right and left, he felt no interest.

Upon his wife his eyes lingered occasionally, her head being the most conspicuous object in his field of vision. But to many people in the audience Mrs. Armstrong was an object of considerable interest. Her face, a trifle worn and weary, was of the variety most often seen among middle-aged females who pursue a similar career. It was neither plain nor beautiful—neither patrician nor

noticeably "common." Among the competitors in other boxes she held her own. The diamonds upon her head and neck were resplendent. Mrs. Armstrong was of interest to many gazers as being distinctly a "social leader"—a prominent figure in the richest and most plebeian society in the world.

As the curtain descended at the end of the act Mr. Armstrong left the box. Pushing open the door and stepping out into the corridor he came in contact with a man who appeared to be passing at the moment. With an apology and a careless glance at the face which he had never seen before —he sauntered slowly along the curving corridor. The stranger happened to be going in the same direction, apparently, for he followed the financier.

Another man, leaning against the baluster of the main staircase, acknowledged by a slight elevation of his eyebrows a glance from Mr. Armstrong's follower. This man by the stairs, although in conventional evening garb, gave no outward promise of being a gentleman. To those who happened to regard him with any attention he returned a glance involuntarily suspicious, and with a mild defiance. Small eyes, set by nature at slightly varying angles, were a superfluous handicap to a face already somewhat knavish.

His physique, however, seemed perfect. He was heavy in the shoulders, deep in the chest and solid on his legs. He might be of almost any nationality. This man also followed the financier. But Mr. Armstrong was ignorant of the special attention accorded him by these two strangers.

Other people emerged from the boxes, among them a man whom Mr. Armstrong greeted with a more cheerful face.

"Billy," he said, "are you in favor of a general massacre of millionaires—something systematic and comprehensive?"

"Well," replied Mr. William Chapman, as they moved on together, "I believe in progress. And I haven't forgotten about the camel's hair shawl getting through the eye of a needle."

"Have you heard from the People's League yet?"

"People's League? I have heard *of* it."

"But not *from* it?"

"No."

"Not visited yet by the fellow with the gold teeth?"

"Who's he?"

"You'll know soon enough. Perhaps you are not aware that rich men are the curse of this country?"

The gentleman addressed, who happened, at that moment, to be regarding with interest a well-known belle standing near them, answered carelessly, "Yes, I have seen cartoons to that effect."

"And do you happen to know that we are such a menace to the liberties of the people and to the very existence of the republic that we have got to go?"

"Really? And where?"

"To hell, of course."

Mr. William Chapman smiled. "Well, let us hope your information is not official."

"It *is* official."

As Mr. Armstrong spoke with some seriousness, Mr. Chapman inquired also with more seriousness, "What are you driving at, David?"

"I mean that I have been held up, yesterday afternoon, in my own office, by a stranger, for two hundred thousand dollars blackmailed. And I was given to understand by the friendly gentleman that unless I handed over the money I should be a dead man within a very few days."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"And what did you say?"

"I ordered him out."

Billy Chapman laughed. "Well, I could have guessed your answer."

"Wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

"I hope so."

"I will tell you all about it to-morrow. Quite a cheerful little scheme, I assure you."

"All right. I will stop for you in the morning and we'll go down together."

"Good. What time?"

"Say—quarter before ten?"

"I will be ready."

"If he is coming to your office again, this special highwayman, why not hand him over to the police?"

"Police in this case are no good, it seems. Law and order are back numbers. The styles for the coming year will be a general distribution of property, tempered by assassination."

"But, all the same, David, I should hand him over to the police if I were you. He may be just crank enough to try to start the assassination end of the programme."

"He will not bother *me* again. My answer was so definite that they know where they stand so far as *I* am concerned."

This conversation was interrupted by the greeting of two friends, and after a few words of

more enlivening character Mr. Armstrong left them and turned toward his own box.

"At quarter before ten," said Mr. Chapman.

"I will be ready."

The last act was hardly under way when Mr. Armstrong leaned forward and touched his wife on the arm.

"I think I'll trot along, Nellie. I feel more like a walk than sitting here."

Mrs. Armstrong studied her husband's face with a look of anxiety. "Are you tired, dear? or don't you feel well?"

"Never felt better. And I shall be at the house when you get there."

The daughter's attendant, a young man with a handsome nose, stood up and bowed deferentially to the financier. Then, with a parting nod from his wife and daughter, Mr. Armstrong left the box.

III

And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother—*Proverbs* xviii, 24.

WHEN Mr Chapman entered his dining-room the next morning he found his son and heir, Mr. Henry Chapman, at the breakfast table. The son, now eighteen years of age, bore a faint resemblance to his father. Sitting alone at his meal, in the center of a stately room with a background of old portraits by famous masters, and a servant of imposing presence behind his chair, the youthful Chapman might easily pass, to unfamiliar observers, as a royal personage. And he ate his breakfast, read his paper, accepted the homage of attendants and formed part of his regal surroundings with kingly indifference.

The dark, richly carved woodwork of this room, together with the ceiling of painted gods and goddesses, was from an Italian palace. When this ceiling came into existence New York was

an Indian settlement. Thirty years ago it was still the witness of princely festivities. Now, its new owner often lost and won in a single "deal" more treasure than was needed to reinstate the ducal family in all its hereditary possessions.

After the usual greetings both father and son became absorbed in their morning papers. In silence they ate and read. The father, thanks to a somewhat boyish face and a fresh, out-of-door complexion, appeared younger than he was; and his age was forty-two. In the short, brown hair had come a sprinkling of gray the forehead was low, but broad and intelligent. A closely trimmed mustache served merely to accentuate a pleasant, clean-cut mouth. He was exceedingly "well groomed." In athletics of every kind he took a lively interest; and he still shouted for Harvard. All his friends called him Billy. They would continue to call him Billy until he died of old age. For, first of all, he was a "good fellow"—frank, open hearted, generous and a firm friend.

When six years of age a devoted but conscientious grandmother—obviously with a sense of humor—had left him nine hundred and fifty thousand dollars. The rest of her fortune she gave elsewhere, stating in her will that a million dollars was too much for a young man to start

with. Her good intentions, however, were thwarted, later on. For, while still at college, Billy inherited by the untimely death of his father a sum of money generally estimated at twenty millions. But Fortune, who seldom does things by halves—either for good or evil—laid at his feet about three years later a dozen millions more. This third inheritance was bequeathed unintentionally by the husband of the humorous grandmother. This gentleman had made the mistake of destroying one will before completing another. So the money came to Billy instead of to a college and two hospitals. These various sums, being well invested, gave the youthful William Chapman an income of more than twelve hundred thousand a year. Consequently, and against his will, he soon became a prominent citizen, a man of weight, a political and social "factor," a figure in finance, a great catch, the envy of men and the desire of maidens, all before he was thirty years old. Yet he remained unspoiled. He was still "Billy" Chapman; frank, friendly, and unassuming. Moreover, he enjoyed his money; he enjoyed his friends, and he enjoyed existence generally.

And this morning, as we see him at breakfast, although from infancy the victim of excessive wealth, he bore no signs about the eyes and under-

lip of a look which often comes to the overrich. An income of a million dollars a year entitles its owner to all the pleasure such an amount can purchase. If he fails to get that pleasure—and of course, he does fail -he is entitled legally to all the resentment coming from perverted justice. And this resentment, when long indulged in, embitters the soul and leaves its mark upon the owner's countenance. In Billy Chapman's face, however, that look had not abided. Around his mouth were faintest indications of a hardening process; but the eyes were cheerful.

"I say, father, here's something that may interest you. It seems you are a sneak thief and ought to be in jail."

"Yes?"

"It gives a list of rich men who pay a tax on half a million when they ought to pay on at least twenty times as much."

"That's an old story."

"Your name is near the top. Listen to this:

"'These public spirited citizens, by shirking their taxes, which are honest debts, throw the additional burden on the working people. Our millionaires are perfectly willing to enjoy all city improvements, paid for by the earnings of their less prosperous brothers. The shivering sinner who steals

an overcoat is put in jail. These wealthier citizens, however, accomplish their purpose more safely. Their methods are more scientific.'

"How's that?"

"Very good."

"Want some more?"

The father nodded. "Yes, it is interesting—but not instructive."

The young man read on:

"'This is one reason why our taxes are so heavy. But such details do not worry the worthy gentlemen above mentioned. That the poor should pay the debts of the rich is but another financial triumph.'"

Billy frowned as he recalled some of David Armstrong's words the night before.

"Had enough?" inquired the son, with a smile.

"No. Go ahead."

"'Many of these gentlemen ease their consciences now and then by a donation of some sort —generally to a hospital. When the prominent citizen appropriates a million dollars of other people's money, then returns one-tenth of it as a gift, which is received with humble gratitude, who can blame him for despising his victims?'"

"Those are mischievous articles," said Billy, "purposely written to stir up class feeling."

"But, by Jove, father! there's just enough cold

truth in it to leave a taste in the mouth. Now, isn't there?"

The parent shook his head. The son, tossing his napkin on the table, pushed back his chair. "If a certain sneak thief should offer to take me down-town this morning, I might accept."

"Can't do it, Harry. Mr. Armstrong is going with me."

"Well, good-by."

"Good-by, Harry."

Alone with his morning paper, Billy Chapman soon became interested in a paragraph under the heading, "Mystery in the death of Waldo Greene." For the Hon. Waldo Greene, a friend of his, had died in Chicago the week before, apparently a suicide. Why this friend perfectly strong and well, of sound and cheerful mind—should have taken his own life was beyond Billy Chapman's understanding. And he had not believed it. Waldo Greene and Billy had been together in several important transactions.

The paragraph ran thus:

The family of Mr. Waldo Greene have begun a searching investigation into the causes of his death. The theory of suicide is no longer accepted. There are circumstances, it is claimed, which indicate foul play. The mystery of his sudden and, to his intimate friends, inexplicable death is to be thoroughly investigated. Mr. Greene's fortune, variously estimated at

from ten to fifteen millions, goes entirely to his wife and three daughters.

This sudden loss of an able and congenial associate had been a shock to Billy Chapman. He read the paragraph a second time, sincerely hoping that if a crime had been committed the perpetrators might be brought to justice.

His reflections were interrupted by a deferential voice. "Miss Love is here, sir. She says you wished to see her."

"Show her into the library, Henry."

And when Billy Chapman entered the library a very few moments later, he found his visitor standing before the open fire.

Miss Bertha Love, a woman about sixty years of age, was the possessor of one of those rosy complexions that never fade with increasing years. While her white hair, round black eyes, somewhat Roman nose and dark, clearly defined eyebrows gave the appearance of a Marshal of France of the old régime she was by no means of a warlike spirit. Her spirit, on the contrary, was exceptionally pacific, affectionate and timid. During eight years of Billy Chapman's childhood she had, while governess, been a better mother than the one he had lost. The real mother had taken far more interest in social matters than in her boy at

home. And even with that mother his acquaintance was brief, as she died when he was four years old.

Although the reign of Bertha Love had ended nearly thirty years ago, her subsequent birthdays were never forgotten. On one of these anniversaries Billy had given her the wherewithal to start a woman's *lingerie* shop.

This morning, as he entered the library, he approached her with a smile of welcome, shook hands and kissed her.

"Glad to see you, Lovey. How are you? All right?"

"Yes, sir, very well indeed, thank you. And I hope you are as well as ever?"

"Yes, thank you, as well as a man can be who is snubbed and slighted by his oldest friend. I have a bone to pick with you."

"With me, sir?"

"Yes, with you. Why don't you come to me when you are in trouble? I used to go to you when I was in trouble."

"I have been to you a great many times, sir, when in trouble. So much and so often that Freeman says I must not keep running to you all the time."

"Ah, that's it, is it? Well, it is none of your

brother's business, and you can tell him I said so. Now, don't you go and stop a good habit. Always come straight to me. I hear trade has been slack and you need money. How much?"

And he seated himself at his desk, opened a check book and dipped a pen in ink.

"Oh, no, Mr. Chapman! Really I"——

"Now, look here, Lovey, are you angry with me?"

"Angry with you! I? Oh, how could I—how can you think that?"

"Then stop calling me Mr. Chapman. Let's get right back to old times. You are the best old governess that ever was, and I am a bad little boy. We must help each other."

Solemnly Mrs. Love shook her head. "You were never a bad little boy. Never *very* bad."

Mr. Chapman laughed. "No badder than a boy could be—who did his worst sometimes. But tell me, Lovey, how much do you need?"

Mrs. Love hesitated.

"How much?" he insisted.

She stood up, fingered her dress nervously, and looked away. Billy came over to her and stood with both hands on her shoulders.

"Now, look here; you have got to let me help you or tell me why I can't. No secrets. If you

can't trust me we will break off the acquaintance at once."

Mrs. Love's eyes were getting moist.

"Well, Mr."——

"Billy."

"Well, Mr. Billy, Freeman made me promise that I would not ask you for any more money."

Billy walked away, then wheeled about.

"Your brother Freeman is a meddling mischief-maker. He is a bad brother."

"No, oh, no!"

"He *is*. And you are a weak sister to mind him. Now, I happen to know that you need about three thousand dollars."

"No, sir, only twenty-five hundred, but I can get it."

"Where?"

Mrs. Love made no reply, but studied the carpet.

"Where?" he repeated.

Still no reply, and her eyes avoided his.

"Look here, Lovey, you are lying to me. As an old friend you are treating me very shabbily."

"Don't say that, Mr. Billy!"

"I do say it. However, I won't ask you to break your promise to you evil-minded brother.

But you will do business with me, I suppose; sell things in your store if I want to buy them."

"Yes, sir, of course."

"Well, let's decide what I most need."

Thoughtfully he tapped his forehead with the penholder. "I find my stockings are too short. I need longer ones, such as women wear. You keep them, don't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what's the price of good ones good, thick, long ones that come way up above the knee?"

"You are laughing at me."

"You answer my questions."

"Well, sir, you can get them all the way from twenty-five cents a pair to ten dollars."

"Ten dollars a pair. Are those nice and thick?"

"No; not especially thick. It's the work and lace that makes them so expensive."

"Sort of—embroidery?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want them handsome. I shall need about fifty pairs."

"Oh, absurd!" And again Miss Love stood up.

"Sit down," said Billy.

Miss Love sat down.

"It is not at all absurd. You remember how I used to wear my stockings out?"

She nodded.

"Well, I am harder on stockings now than ever. I weigh a good deal more than I did as a child. Besides, my knees get cold, especially if I go out in the snow without trousers."

"Excuse me, Mr. Billy, but you are just as silly as when you were a little boy."

"Good for you!" exclaimed Billy. "Good for you, old Lovey! Now we are getting back to old times—and old relations. You scold me and I'll sass back. Now, that makes five hundred dollars." And he put down the figures on his piece of paper.

"Let's see—you have all sorts of underclothes?"

She merely regarded him with suspicion.

"Haven't you?"

"But only for ladies."

"Yes, I know; but that is just what I need. I am tired of men's underclothes. They are too coarse—and rough. How much are they a set?—women's things?"

"All sorts of prices."

"The very best; how much?"

"They are most elaborately worked sometimes. Certain ladies pay five or six hundred dollars."

"That is the kind I want. Four sets at six

hundred dollars comes to twenty-four hundred. Now, let's see. What else is there?"

Miss Love made no answer, but stood up and gazed upon him as a pious mother might gaze upon a wicked child.

"Sit down."

Miss Love sat down.

There was a short silence, the gentleman leaning back in his chair with half-closed eyes.

"Corsets!" he exclaimed. "Of course! What's the price of the very best you keep? Solid silk ones trimmed with point lace, and with gold buttons?"

She smiled scorntully. "I don't keep such things."

"Then tell me the price of the best ones you do keep. Come, go ahead. This is business."

"All the way from two dollars and a half up."

"Up to what? Isn't there extra work on them sometimes?"

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"What kind?"

"Hand work; flowers and ornamental designs."

"That's what I want. Did you ever embroider on corsets, any—well, for instance—the Declaration of Independence?"

"Never."

"What is the price for the most elaborate styles?"

"As high as forty dollars."

"Then make these very elaborate and give me ten pairs."

"Ten!"

"Yes, ten. You don't realize, Nursey, how quickly I use up a pair of corsets."

"You!"

"Yes, I breathe very hard. Always expanding and contracting. Corsets don't last me any time at all."

Lifting the piece of paper from the table he read:

"Five hundred for stockings, twenty-four for underwear, and four for the corsets. That comes to thirty-three hundred dollars."

He drew a check for that amount, came over and placed it in her hand.

"Now, this is purely a business transaction. You are to deliver the goods when I ask you for them. But there is one condition. If the articles are not called for within twenty-four hours they are forfeited and become the property of the seller, who retains the purchase money."

She shook her head. "That is a most unusual condition, Mr. Chap"——

"Billy."

"Mr. Billy."

"Yes, but a good one. Special cases call for special treatment."

Miss Love blinked. "How can I—ever thank you enough?"

"By coming to see me oftener, and treating me as a friend, not as a stranger."

As she moved toward the door her eyes were moist, and she seemed to be trying to swallow something.

"I say, Lovey."

She turned about.

"Don't forget old customs."

Whereupon, she held his face with both hands, tapped one cheek and kissed the other, then, for a brief moment, she looked into his eyes with an expression that made words superfluous.

Into both faces came the smile of perfect understanding—of an old-time sympathy and affection.

She moved away, paused in the doorway and looked back. There was evidently something to say, but the words were lacking. Then, slowly, she departed.

Half an hour later Billy Chapman alighted from his electric brougham at Mr. Armstrong's house.

Passing through the vestibule he said to the

man at the door, "Good morning, Jerry. Just tell Mr. Armstrong I am here."

And he walked on into the hall. This hall was of white and yellow marbles; the staircase of bronze and gilt. In each of the four corners was a statue of the seasons.

At the foot of the stairs he stopped. Then, with upturned face, he whistled a few bars of a popular darky song. While he waited for some response from his friend who was always punctuality itself—the servant approached and said, in a low voice:

"I beg pardon, sir, but did you expect to see Mr. Armstrong?"

"Yes."

"Then you don't know, sir, that he is dead?"

"Dead?" repeated Billy.

"Yes, sir. He was brought home this morning about one o'clock."

"Dead!" Billy repeated, this time in a whisper.

"Yes, sir. He was found lying in the snow on the sidewalk. He had fallen and struck his head upon a step; between the Opera House and Sixth Avenue."

For a moment Billy Chapman was silent. He found difficulty in believing the man's words.

Hat in hand, with bowed head, he paced slowly across the hall, then back.

"Please go up to Mrs. Armstrong, Jerry, and ask her if I can be of any service—of any possible service, in any way?"

Then, turning about, he entered a reception room at the right of the hall. Dropping into a chair, he sat, with his eyes upon the floor, trying to realize that David Armstrong, the man of perfect health, of exceptional vitality and force—yesterday so very much alive—to-day was a thing of the past. He recalled his friend's words at the opera the night before—the allusion to a threat of assassination.

The old servant soon returned. He was a friend of the family—a "character"—with an expansive, cheerful face. The face now, however, had become almost humorous in its solemnity. But the grief was very real. Jerry and his master had been the firmest of friends.

"Mrs. Armstrong thanks you very much, sir. But she is lying down -quite broken up. She says she will surely tell you later, sir, if there is anything you can do."

"Who is with her now, Jerry? Who is here?"

"Her brother, sir, and Dr. Gilford; also her nephew, Mr. William Armstrong."

Billy Chapman wrote a few lines upon his card. "Give that to Mrs. Armstrong. I have added the telephone number of my office. Tell her to be sure and call me up at any moment if she cares to see me; and that I will come at once."

For a moment the two men stood facing each other. "Well, after all, Jerry, the worst thing about death is the fear of it."

"There is one other, sir. It lasts too long."

Billy smiled faintly. "Well, yes. Eternity *is* long."

"For a gentleman who needed a frequent change, like Mr. Armstrong, it's going to be very dull, indeed, sir." And Jerry also smiled, but sadly.

Alone in his auto, Billy Chapman saw little that occurred about him on his way down-town. The salutations of his friends were returned mechanically, and without the usual smile.

IV

Get money; still get money, boy;
No matter by what means.

—*Every Man in His Humour.*

THAT night, as a clock struck nine in the directors' room of a certain Trust Company, Billy Chapman and six other men were seated about a large mahogany table. On this table were many sheets of paper: reports, letters, mortgages, transfers, and a variety of legal documents. Through the gathering smoke from seven pure Havanas an electric cluster in the center of the ceiling shed an opalescent but abundant light.

The room was impressive. Its high wainscoting, elaborate ceiling, chairs and heavy table all were of solid mahogany. Over the mantel hung a full-length portrait of the president of the company, done by a famous painter. An atmosphere of high finance the very highest—pervaded the apartment and could not be impaired by any aroma of tobacco.

The Silent War

Of the seven men about the table one was a "Railroad King"; another an Owner of Coal Mines; another -potent in various fields—we will call the Solid Citizen. For, as a "solid citizen," he was typical:—solid of mind, body and fortune. His imagination, swamped in dollars, had been dead some twenty years. The three other men were lawyers, two from a Western city. The third, Mr. Ellis Tucker, of New York, was the legal counsel of our millionaires.

Billy Chapman looked at his watch. "Something must have happened to Payson."

"Missed his train, probably," said the Solid Citizen.

"But he doesn't miss trains," said Billy; "he keeps his engagements."

The Owner of Coal Mines also studied his watch. "I hope nothing has happened to him."

The Solid Citizen leaned toward the Owner of Mines and spoke in a low voice: "Do you think do you fear anything—anything in particular?"

"Why, no. How do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I didn't know but you had some idea of accident—or—or foul play, or something in your mind."

"Well," said Billy, "there's no use in worrying.

We can give him half an hour yet, and still put the business through. But as for foul play, I can't get Armstrong out of my mind." He quoted his friend's significant reference, the night before, to a threatened assassination. These words, taken in connection with the mysterious ending of Waldo Greene and a Pittsburg magnate, caused the Owner of Coal Mines to exclaim:

"It looks like a St. Bartholomew's night for men of property. Whose turn next?"

"And who's at the bottom of it?" said the Railroad King. "If there's any law in the land this seems a good time to show itself."

"Looks to me," said Billy, "as if some organization—a secret society or something—was behind it. So many deaths, in a bunch this way, has the air of systematic work."

"All the more reason for losing no time in stamping it out," said the Railroad King. "This is not the country for anarchists. A few hangings would be in order just now. Did you say, Chapman, that somebody had distinctly threatened Armstrong with assassination unless he agreed to hand over money?"

"So he said. But I don't think it frightened him much. He was the wrong customer to tackle with that sort of a proposition."

There was a pause. The Solid Citizen studied his cigar.

"Well," said the Owner of Coal Mines, as he tossed across the table a copy of a Western newspaper, "I should think from that editorial we were a gang of pirates. Those people seem to look on the granting of a franchise as the devil's own work."

Mr. Ellis Tucker looked up from the legal documents in his hands and removed his eyeglasses. "And why shouldn't they?"

The short, wide face of Mr. Ellis Tucker, with its sharp eyes and gray, alert mustache with upturned ends, gave him the appearance—in a general way of an elderly kitten. But there was nothing kittenish in his mental machinery. Concerning those questions of law which interested our four millionaires Mr. Tucker was an authority.

"Stuff!" said the Solid Citizen.

The Solid Citizen always spoke in a firm tone. His eye was firm; his mouth and his jaw were firm—so firm that many who came in contact with him often yielded in advance, without a struggle. But these external manifestations of a dauntless courage and an iron will were fraudulent. Inwardly he was softer than mud, weaker

than water, more flabby than jelly. His scant allowance of courage, moral and otherwise, was panicky -semiliquid, ever ready to melt and trickle away. His nebulous conscience he had not heard from for thirty years.

But Mr. Tucker smiled gently. "Nobody favors it except us. We are stealing it."

"We are buying it."

"Yes, buying it of aldermen who don't own it."

Billy nodded. "Right you are, Tucker. But think how much richer those deserving aldermen will be!"

Mr. Tucker nodded. "Yes, of course, there's a benevolent side to it. But to go back to Armstrong and these other sudden deaths"

"Call them murders," said the Railroad King; "that's what everybody believes."

"Then you think," said Mr. Tucker, "that the worms have finally turned?"

"What do you mean?" demanded the Railroad King. "What worms? And turned against what?"

"I mean the sat on against the sitter; the robbed against the robber; the poor against the rich. Sure to come."

"Do you mean," inquired the Railroad King,

"you think class feeling is so bitter as to lead to any such violence?"

"Surely. And you are hanging over the edge of it now—by your eyelids."

The Railroad King smiled. "Calamity howler! The poor have always hated the rich—in every country. Why now, in this country, more than at any other time?"

"If you really want to know, I will tell you."

"Fire away," said Billy. "We might as well hear socialism as anything else until Payson comes."

"Well," said Mr. Tucker, "you have no public spirit. You reap without sowing. Instead of helping the poor man, you not only swindle him whenever you get a chance, but you do it openly and with no shame. You have cornered everything he eats, drinks, wears and uses and you would corner the air he breathes if you only knew how. There has been no finer example, since the world began, of quenchless greed."

"Thanks, old man. Continue."

"Other plutocracies have had standards of some kind. You are merely a herd of gamblers. You have lots of fun with the law. You are buying legislators every day—this franchise, for instance," and he raised a package of papers from the table.

"And before the month is ended you will be at it again."

Here the Owner of Coal Mines exchanged glances with the Railroad King, as he exclaimed, with a laugh, "No. Not *this* month!—next month."

The Railroad King smiled.

The Solid Citizen slowly shook his head, regarding Mr. Tucker with serious disapproval. "I believe you read populist papers, Tucker."

"Yes, because you men have bought up the others. Already owning the earth and what's in it, you are trying to gobble public opinion, too. Some of us want to hear both sides. You only hear one side and don't give a damn for any other."

"Ellis," said the Owner of Coal Mines, "you would make a splendid preacher—a successful exhorter among the anarchists."

"Take you four men," continued the speaker with a slight salutation, "what is your mission on earth except herding dollars? What good do you pretend to do, anyway?"

"I'll be hanged if I know," replied Billy.

Mr. Tucker blew a little cloud of tobacco smoke upward, toward the electric cluster. "As for plunder, you are drunk with it. Your thirst is beyond quenching. The figures you deal in are

abnormal. You absorb everything in the shape of money you can lay your hands on."

"And your pious pauper," said the Owner of Coal Mines, "would be doing the same thing if he had a chance."

"But he can't get the chance, and that's only another aggravation. All the good chances are yours."

Here the Solid Citizen grunted, got up from his chair and moved about the room.

"And when hard times come again," continued the lawyer, "as they are sure to, you will be almighty lucky as a class if you get off with a few orderly assassinations instead of red-handed riots." And he smiled pleasantly.

"Well, by Jove!" said Billy; "the assassination seems already under way!"

Mr. Tucker's attention, at this point, was required by the visiting lawyer. After a brief consultation over the wording of a clause he leaned back in his chair and looked at his watch. "If Payson doesn't turn up soon we shall be in a hole."

"Assassination," said the Solid Citizen from the further end of the room, "seems a heavy penalty for promoting the commerce of a country —and developing its industries."

"Developing its plunder, you mean," said the lawyer. "Why, you millionaires are in the class with the Barbary pirates."

Pointing at the Owner of Coal Mines: "Look at this shining example. What do he and his pals care for the constitution of Pennsylvania—or for any other constitution? According to that investigation by Congress, their extortion—not profits, but extortion—is forty-one millions of dollars a year. An open robbery of every man, woman and child who uses a hod of coal. He would see the whole population freeze rather than take off a cent a ton. And he can't begin to spend the interest on his income."

The Owner of Coal Mines took a case from his pocket and selected a fresh cigar. "Well, business is business. I am not in it to reform the world."

The Railroad King laughed. "No, but Tucker is, apparently." Then, turning to the lawyer: "Tell us how to be good, old man. What is your advice?"

"Well," said Mr. Tucker, "from such hardened thieves as you two, I should not expect repentance. I can give you a suggestion, however, in a matter of taste."

"Let us have it, by all means."

Before replying, Mr. Tucker blew another little

cloud of tobacco toward the ceiling. "In the first place, don't kick a big dog too often after he shows his teeth. Just as a matter of taste."

"What do you mean by showing his teeth?" demanded the Solid Citizen, who was moving restlessly about the room.

"I mean what happened to Waldo Greene, David Armstrong and one or two others."

"You mean," said the Railroad King with a contemptuous gesture, "that those deaths are" —

"Retaliatory," said the lawyer. "You are hearing from the enemy."

"Rot!"

"Furthermore, I would suggest —also merely as a matter of taste—that being recognized as gamblers, you make yourselves less conspicuous. Try to travel without private cars. Avoid getting the best of everything by extravagant fees. Give people of moderate means a chance to get what they pay for."

"By Jove, old man," said Billy, "there's some sense in that!"

The Owner of Coal Mines frowned. "Ellis can be quite funny when he tries."

With closed eyes and head to one side, Mr. Tucker seemed to be communing with himself. "In sanguine moments, under the influence of

wine, I almost believe there may be something greedier and more ostentatiously hoggish than the American millionaire."

A silence followed. Billy Chapman looked at his watch. The Railroad King yawned, and inquired, before the yawn was entirely completed: "At what age, Ellis, did you receive this inspiration—this heaven-sent idea that all prosperous people are wicked, that only the uneducated are always good?"

"I never had it. And in this particular business I have no sympathy with the people. If they like what you and your tariff and trusts have been giving them the last ten years, why, let them have it—and more, too. If they enjoy being robbed and then kicked, why, kick some more. You can't rob them any more, for you have already secured about 90 per cent. of the entire wealth of the country."

Billy Chapman nodded approval.

The Solid Citizen frowned. "That is not true, Tucker. Besides, it has always been the tendency of capital to centralize of wealth to be controlled by some conservative element, by men of experience."

"By men of experience, yes. Other pirates have had the same idea."

"Other what?"

"Other financiers other philanthropists. The name doesn't matter." Mr. Tucker said this with a mirthful expression—and something like a wink at Billy Chapman. In so doing he resembled more than ever an elderly kitten. And all the millionaires, except the Solid Citizen, laughed involuntarily. But the Solid Citizen said nothing. He knew that whenever the conversation wandered away from facts or from the serious expression of serious opinions his safest course was silence. In the field of fun his tread was heavy. And he ignored the fact that nothing is duller than a dull Crœsus. When the average citizen is dull, he makes an effort to conceal it. But Crœsus, already possessing something better than brains, is above that effort.

"If Payson doesn't get here almighty soon," said Billy, "we shall have to forge his signature."

"It's no joking matter," growled the Solid Citizen.

"Excuse me," said the Owner of Coal Mines, with a smile, "everything is a joking matter. Better die of mirth than of fright."

"But where is Stockton?" demanded Mr. Tucker. "Every signature will help. Didn't he agree to be here?"

"He's all right," said the Railroad King. "May be here at any minute." Then, looking at his watch. "He ought to have been here before this, though. He went to Boston last night, but was to get back at six o'clock."

"Probably missed it," said the Solid Citizen.

"No, he was bound to be at this meeting. Besides, he would have telegraphed."

"Then his train," said Billy, "must be several hours late; which isn't likely."

"Call up his house," said the Owner of Coal Mines. "There's a phone at that desk over there."

The Railroad King walked over to the instrument. After his few preliminary words, the men about the long table became silent, then turned to each other with startled faces. Although hearing only the unanswered questions of their companion, they exchanged significant glances as the monologue proceeded; and they forgot their cigars.

"Mr. Stockton?"

"Well, what's the matter, old man? Boston beans too much for you? We have been waiting for you about an hour."

"What?"

"Why, yes; of course!"

"Oh! I beg your pardon. I supposed I was talking to your father."

"No word since when?"

"Ten-thirty last night! Really?"

"Nor anybody in the house?"

"Isn't there some one who can"——

"That's most extraordinary. Not even Mrs. Stockton?"

"Very what?"

"Dark—oh, yes!"

"He never went to Boston at all?"

"But can't your own coachman explain?"

"You say nobody knows who they were?"

"Then none of the family—or household—knows any more than"——

"But who saw him get in?"

"Two men what?"

"On the what?"

"Box—oh, yes!"

"Not like him. No, certainly not."

"A *dozen* telegrams!"

"All from Boston?"

"Oh, you do!"

"Didn't reach what?"

"The station? The Grand Central Depot?"

"Suspicious! I should say so!"

"Filled—I don't quite understand."

"Oh, killed! She does?"

"Ah!"

"That was when you saw him enter the carriage?"

"If we can be of any service, don't fail to let me know."

"Yes, yes."

"Surely, and to the very bottom."

"No."

"Yes."

"Well, thank you. Good-by."

As the Railroad King rejoined his friends at the table he found expectant faces.

"Perhaps you all guessed what has happened?"

"Yes," said Ellis Tucker; "Stockton got into a carriage at ten-thirty last night, was driven toward Madison Avenue, and no sign of him since. Is that the gist of it?"

"That is the story. He never got to Boston. I knew he intended going last night to attend a meeting there this morning, then take an afternoon train and get here in time for this business. But telegrams have come from there asking where he is."

"What were they telling you about a carriage?"

"His own carriage, which was waiting for him at the door, had two men in ordinary clothes—that is, not in livery—on the box."

"Were they telling you that he never reached the Grand Central?"

"So they believe."

"What was that about his being killed?"

"Only Mrs. Stockton's nervousness."

"Well," said Billy Chapman, "if he is alive, why isn't he here? I believe Mrs. Stockton is right."

"You do?"

"I do. He has joined David Armstrong—and the others."

There was a silence. It was broken by the Owner of Coal Mines, who remarked as he lighted a cigar, "I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts, Billy, that our friends here present are enjoying exactly the same thought that you and I are."

"Which is?"

"That being five of the richest men in this neighborhood, our turn is coming next."

The others nodded. Some smiled, but the smiles were evanescent.

The Solid Citizen, however, who was far from being a "sport," and was by nature apprehensive and ever anxious about his health, here surprised his companions. With a careless, almost merry smile, he remarked:

"Well, we will die with our boots on. I am

ready, for one. "We cannot expect to live forever. There are worse things than death."

These honorable platitudes, coming from the man in the assembly who would, under all signs failed, have retired the quickest and farthest in case of danger, were received in silent wonder.

The Railroad King glared at the speaker, then looked about him, as if doubting his own ears. Billy Tucker raised his eyebrows in exaggerated astonishment. As his glance met Billy Chapman's the latter sighed and closed one eye. The Owner of Coal Mines appeared for a moment as if overcome. Then he whistled, softly, an air from a comic opera.

V

You in America may do what you please, but I will not suffer capitalists in Germany to suck the life out of the working men, and then fling them like squeezed orange-skins into the gutter.—*Emperor William.*

MR. PAYSON'S absence was unintentional. If the ferryboat arrived on time which it promised—he expected to meet his friends at the appointed hour. He had no misgivings. As he strolled to and fro across the outer deck he glanced occasionally at the illuminated "skyscrapers" of the city he was rapidly nearing. All else, the sky above and waters beneath, were of inky blackness.

Mr. George Payson was a short man, and slight. He experienced, at moments, a mild sense of shame at his modest dimensions, his weight being a trifle over one hundred pounds. The general proportions, however, were good. Being now about fifty, and several times a millionaire, a moneyed look had settled about the mouth. The face, as a whole, might be considered a little too sharp for beauty, but the features were regular

and the general impression satisfactory, that is, neither cold, repellant, purse-proud nor unduly self-satisfied.

When twenty-two years of age he arrived in New York with hope and health and empty pockets, and secured a position as clerk in an elevator company. Three years later he was private secretary to the president of that company. Being endowed with two golden gifts, common sense and a "personality," he became not only a favorite with his employer's friends, but indispensable. Convivial, yet never intemperate; generous, yet never in debt; frank and open hearted, yet never forgetting himself nor divulging secrets; a good story teller with an absolutely reliable sense of humor, untiring energy and a brain that was always clear, he moved steadily and rapidly upward. His ascension was inevitable. While a lover of dollars, with success his goal, there were incidental trifles which he did not forget. One was the girl he had left behind him in a little village in Vermont. Having risen financially and socially to unexpected heights, he turned his back on certain shining matrimonial opportunities in New York and married the school teacher in his native village. That, of course, was long ago. Now, like many American women, she maintained

with ease and dignity the duties of her new position. Having little love for a fashionable career she reached, nevertheless, the dizziest social heights. Payson often asserted, "If a man with a million cannot pick his playmates in this New York rabble he should seek refuge with the feeble-minded."

From a "prominent citizen," George Payson became a "power in the Street," then a "King of Finance." One common tendency of exceeding wealth -that of confusing one's own magnetism with that of his money—he had escaped.

To-day his wealth had become an interesting topic of speculation. Intimate friends could guess within a few millions. He himself could come a little nearer; but nobody knew exactly.

This evening, after walking about the deck of the ferryboat he happened to seat himself upon a bench in a shadowy corner. From a group of men beside him, whose faces in the darkness he could not discern, a few words at once held his attention.

"I say get our rights. Poor thieves are made to unload. Why not rich ones?"

"Oh, that would be too cruel," came in a sarcastic voice; "and after all they've done for us!"

"Yes, and what are they still doin' with their

tariff and trusts? For everything we use, meat, fuel, tobacco, cloth, gas, we pay an extra slaves' tribute -and a damned big one."

A third man cleared his throat and started a reply, but the speaker drowned him out. "I say put an end to it. They don't consider *us* much, nor the law, either. Why, in God's name, should we consider *them*, or the laws of their makin'?"

"Put an end to it, yes," said a voice, calm and sententious; "but we don't want violence. The revolution should be bloodless."

"Bloodless!" and the sarcastic voice laughed. "Yes, hangin' is bloodless. Within a year you'll see a millionaire danglin' from every lamp-post on Fifth Avenue."

Here a new voice came in, a very deep bass—calmly, but as one accustomed to attention. "No, you will not. It is going to be settled in a better style. There may be a little retribution just at first, but all in a genteel, orderly way."

"What way, Mr. Love?"

"Love!" repeated Payson to himself. "What an ideal name for a thirsty revolutionist!"

"Well, I am not at liberty to say just now. But you know about the organization—the big organization, that is not entirely for the benefit of capitalists."

One of two voices murmured assent. "Well, it's coming sooner than you expect; in fact, it is here."

"Good!"

"We hold there is no crime in taking a guilty life," continued Mr. Love of the deep voice, "if by so doing many innocent lives are saved."

"Certainly not!"

"Sound doctrine!"

"Good work!"

A brief silence followed, in which one of the party seemed to attract the eyes of the others as he lighted a very unfragrant cigar. During this short and imperfect illumination of the group of faces Payson studied his companions. They certainly were not anarchists in appearance, rather a group of prosperous workingmen—or skilled mechanics.

"Well," said a voice with a Yankee drawl, "the sooner the better. I was a farmer, up to this year, and your capitalists are driving the whole of us out of business."

"Is that a fact?"

"More than thirty thousand farmers gave it up last year as a bad job. Most of them went over into Canada."

"Thirty thousand! Well! I didn't know it was so bad as that."

"You'd know it if you were in the business. All you've got to do is to consult the official figures of the Canadian Government. Perhaps you have heard of the Farm Implement Trust?"

"Yes."

"And the New Harvester Trust?"

"Yes."

"Well, we have to buy of them, and always at *their* price, mind you. And we sell our crops to the Produce Trust at *their* prices. So they whittle us at both ends."

"Well, they've got you foul, and no mistake!"

"They have. We stand about the same chance as a beetle in a haycutter."

"But, then, the railroads help you out."

The sarcastic voice chuckled. "Oh, yes! The railroads help him out, for the railroad is the friend of the workingman."

"Do *they* soak you, too?"

"Soak us! Well, I guess! Why do you s'pose we burn our own corn for fuel when folks in the city are starving for it?"

"God! Think of it!"

"And the dear old railroads," from the sarcastic man, "are all the richer for having done it."

"What's a few thousand farmers more or less?"

Thereupon came expressions of a bitter feeling,

followed by the deep voice of Mr. Love: "Driving farmers into Canada is only one of the many ways American capital develops this country."

"And that's all right," said the ironical voice, "for it's fair and open war between the Trusts and the workingman."

"And don't forget," said another, "that the good millionaires are laboring for us all the time."

"For *us!*"

"Sure! Makin' all sorts of sacrifices that our little earnings may be safe."

"What in the devil are you giving us, Morrison?"

"Oh, you are an ungrateful lot! Have you already forgotten the insurance angels?"

This was greeted with derisive laughter. Payson, however, was not moved to laughter. For several years he had been intimately associated with one or two large insurance companies whose directors, he was well aware, would be in prison if the laws were enforced.

"You are too hard to please," the same voice continued. "Remember how much happier you are than if those goldbugs owned the air as well as the earth. There'd be a tariff on ozone and you'd get mighty little breathing."

"Yes, and at a damned high price."

"But, after all, they only gobble everything in reach. We get what's left."

After a short silence Payson heard a lower voice saying, "Say, Jimmy, let us have the gospel according to Crœsus."

But Jimmy was evidently reluctant or appeared to be—and muttered something about its "sounding too silly."

"Oh, yes, let us have it!" said another. "It must be good with that name to it."

"Yes, Jimmy, go ahead. Give it to us. It's the best thing ever."

After a little more urging "Jimmy" arose and stood before the group of men. So far as Payson could make out, in the gloom, he was a tall, young man, thin and round-shouldered.

"This gospel," he began, "is not according to Crœsus, but according to John, the New York Baptist."

"All the better!"

The speaker, with the finger tips of one hand touching those of the other, cleared his throat. Then, with upturned face, he began. His voice, naturally deep and full, was moderated to the ears of the little group before him. He seemed a born actor, or humorist—or both—and his mimicry of the inflections of voice of a certain type

of preacher, with its exaggerated solemnity and mannerisms, was, even to Payson who detested the sentiments expressed, irresistibly amusing.

THE NEW GOSPEL

"Blessed are the rich.

"Unto him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath nothing shall be withheld even that which he needeth.

"Unto him who hath one million shall be given other millions; yea, more than he can spend.

"The earth shall be his, and the fatness thereof.

"Governors and rulers of the people shall be fed at his door. A legislator shall be as a reed in his grasp. To judges he shall say 'Come off,' and they shall come.

"The choice places of the earth shall he fence in and monopolize. He shall eat, drink and be joyful, and the smoke of aromatic weeds of great price shall he inhale and puff out again.

"He shall do others as he would not have others do him.

"The savings of the laborer shall he manipulate with exceeding wisdom until they also shall be his.

"He shall rejoice and wink the eye of righteousness as he sitteth in the Temple of the Lord.

"Yea, verily, and even the other eye also shall

he wink as he remembereth the hungry sinner who sojourneth at Sing Sing for stealing a sandwich. The Lord hateth a small thief.

"Thrice blessed is the Tariff. It chasteneth the poor and fatteneth the rich, and woe unto him who shall take its name in vain.

"For the Trusts shall devour him in Heaven as upon the earth, forever and ever."

In the hearty laughter which greeted this performance Payson could easily have joined, for the manner of its delivery was extremely humorous. As to the matter itself, however, and the sarcastic comment which followed, his appreciation was feeble.

The boat was entering the dock. Other passengers were moving forward. Payson, as he arose to join the slow human current, realized that he had been receiving unmistakable corroboration of certain utterances he had heard the previous day. These utterances, during an interview with a stranger, were so novel in character, so unexpected and so incredible at the moment that he had refused to consider them. Now, however, he was beginning to suspect that certain mysterious threats were not a "bluff"—that the enemy was at the gate. For these men, to whom he had

just been listening, these men with all their hatred for capitalists—for him and his class -were not enemies of order from beyond the sea; they were not ignorant foreigners with an inborn hostility toward all more prosperous than themselves. In no sense were they Nihilists or Anarchists. They were industrious, thoughtful, representative Americans. Yet, not only was their resentment bitter, their hostility avowed, but they were discussing calmly, in Anglo-Saxon fashion, revolt—and assassination. That a gigantic conspiracy in one shape or another was well under way he no longer doubted.

As the group beside him moved along he noticed that the man with the deep voice was lame and used a cane.

"Speakin' of chariots," said one of these neighbors, "the job that beats all is shuttin' off the public highway for a race course for their damned machines."

"Yes, that takes the button."

"Imagine the mothers of a certain district barring the public from the highway for a baby carriage parade!"

There was a laugh. "Yes, but hasn't a baby carriage the same rights, and isn't it as good a sight as those gasoline devils?"

"Well, rather!"

"It's just the gilded hog's way of telling us he owns everything in sight, and that he's going to take it when he wants it. Am I right?"

"You are."

Along with the crowd Payson left the ferryboat and walked up the gangway. At the top of this gangway he was accosted by a man whom at first he failed to recognize. As the man raised his hat, however, he knew him to be the confidential clerk of Billy Chapman.

"Good evening, Mr. Payson. The place of meeting has been changed to enable the Chicago gentlemen to save time in catching their train."

"Ah! Where is it to be?"

"In a building nearer the ferry. The other gentlemen wanted me to meet you here and direct you."

"All right, show the way."

Outside the ferry house they turned to the left, then back toward the water for a hundred feet, then to the right along the side of a corrugated iron shed that ran within a dozen feet of the edge of the wharf. Here were no lights, and had it not been for the presence of his guide, whom he knew to be the trusted lieutenant of his friend, Payson would have held back. For the locality, although

close to the ferry house, with all its life and bustle, was dark and forbidding. It offered perfect facilities for disposing of an enemy. And as assassination had been one of the uppermost thoughts in this gentleman's mind during the last forty-eight hours, he hesitated. Like David Armstrong, Mr. Payson had been formally notified. He knew a black cross now stood against his name. But he was not easily intimidated. Moreover, he had the fullest confidence in his own vigilance, and in his ability to look out for himself.

The confidential clerk moved tranquilly on. "It is just around this next corner, sir."

Knowing his guide and not being in any way a nervous man, Mr. Payson stepped forward in the darkness.

From that moment his knowledge of what happened was fragmentary and retrospective. He remembered that, about half way along, in the darkest place, as he took a step or two toward the building to avoid what looked like a pile of paving blocks, he received from behind a heavy blow. A club, it seemed, had been aimed at the back of his head. But it fell too low. Striking full upon his neck, it partially stunned him. He staggered and tried to wheel about. Another yet harder blow struck higher up—this time a little too high—

against the edge of his hat brim. And the stiffness of his hat brim saved his life. Half conscious of a vigorous push, he remembered falling, as in a sleep, from a great height, then the chill of icy water, and a sinking down down as if to the bottom of the deepest ocean. But the shock of frigid waters had brought a return of his senses. As he came to the surface he realized the situation, as in a flash of his suddenly sharpened wits. His first impulse was to cry aloud for help. This effort, partly smothered by a mouth full of water, was further discouraged by a paving-stone hurled from above. It grazed his shoulder. A second stone fell within a few inches of his face. These, together with the inspiration which often comes in crises, brought a clear conception of all that was occurring. Silently he put forth his hands, drew up his knees, and took three long, steady strokes toward the wharf. This effort, however, required a supreme effort of strength and will, for he was numbed by the chill of the water and dragged down by the weight of his overcoat. His extended hands came in contact with what he knew must be a floating log. To this he clung. Then, by expending all his strength, he got a leg over it, pulled himself up and lay exhausted, face down, against the slimy surface.

At last he raised his head, then sat up. His eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, told him that other logs floating piles—were lying alongside. Knowing the peril of chill and cramps, he rid himself of his heavy overcoat and began, laboriously, to transfer himself from one log to another. Through this black forest of piles he toiled, always in the direction of the city—away from the river. It seemed an age of struggle, with death beneath, before he reached a shelving bank. Well-nigh exhausted, with shivering limbs, he climbed the oozy, slippery shore, yet always beneath the wharf, lest his enemies overhead might be watching for him. Finally, after a cautious survey above and around, he emerged slowly into an open space beside a warehouse. From a neighboring street came the sound of wheels and human voices.

Again among the living!

Through his chattering teeth he heaved a sigh of joy.

VI

It is high time our bad wealth came to an end.
—*Emerson.*

"TEN minutes of ten." And Mr. Ellis Tucker tapped the table impatiently with his fingers. Once more he scrutinized, mechanically, the documents George Payson was to sign.

"Ten minutes of ten!" And the Owner of Coal Mines, rising from his chair, approached the lawyer from the West. "How much longer can you wait, Mr. Benson?"

This gentleman also consulted his watch. "Half an hour, or three-quarters at the outside."

The Solid Citizen arose and moved about the room, muttering comments on the absent millionaire.

"Let us wait and be cheerful," sneered the Railroad King. "And lose a few millions by his carelessness—or indifference."

"Neither one or the other," replied Billy. "That wouldn't be like him. Something must have happened."

As the Railroad King was formulating a sarcastic reply he received a push on the shoulder from the Owner of Coal Mines, who remarked with a smile, "Oh, cheer up! A few hundred thousand more or less and you will never know the difference. Why, the loss of it may save you. The Kingdom of Heaven is not for the rich. And remember what Tucker has been telling us. You are right in it, as you stand now, for assassination at least."

"Who does all this murdering, anyway? Some secret society of anarchists?"

"No, not anarchists," replied Ellis Tucker. "They call themselves representative citizens."

"Representative thugs!" muttered the Railroad King.

"It is a big organization—the People's League, or some such name."

"Where do they meet?"

"All over the country, I fancy. Haven't you heard of the Committee of Seven?"

"Yes, but I thought that was some sort of a labor union gang."

Tucker smiled. "Well, yes, in a sense. Laborers in the golden vineyard, harvesting millionaires."

"Tucker's a crazy anarchist," muttered the Solid Citizen.

"He's long on abuse," growled the King, "but short on remedy."

"Do you want the remedy?" inquired the lawyer.

"No."

"Yes," said Billy. "Go ahead. Let us have it."

"Well, to begin, you might startle the community by giving the tax collector a check for what you owe him."

"Whew! Now you are joking on a serious subject."

"Give poorer taxpayers a chance. Show some decent feeling."

Billy Chapman shook his head. "How can a man show what he hasn't got?"

"Your heads are enlarged," continued Ellis Tucker. "Instead of moving humbly about with an air of gratitude for license to plunder for conditions that enable you to reap these unholy fortunes what do you do? You gobble the best of everything wherever you go. The fees you give are fantastic—and demoralizing."

"Go on, Ellis," said Billy. "Rip us up the back."

The Solid Citizen, stopping in his walk, addressed the lawyer from the opposite side of the

table, and with more than his usual impressiveness. "Tucker, you are making much out of nothing. Rich men in all countries, since history began, have enjoyed what luxuries their wealth could bring. People nowadays are all too willing to sneer at the dignity of wealth."

"Dignity of wealth! For too many years you have dragged the 'dignity of wealth' through the gutter—the Wall Street gutter. But you have lots of fun with it."

"Why shouldn't we have fun with it?" asked the Owner of Mines. "What's money for, anyway?"

"The old-fashioned capitalist," said Tucker, "had standards, and a position to maintain. Money stood for something in those days."

"We give ten times more in charity—actual dollars than your old-time capitalist."

"Thieves' tribute to public opinion.

With one hand he put
A penny in the urn of poverty,
And with the other took a shilling out.

"Why, the very money you are putting up here to-night belongs to other people."

"It's a legitimate loan."

"Of course! But without the depositors' knowledge. If your clerks were as free with your own money, what would happen?"

"Send them to jail," said Billy.

There was a pause. The Solid Citizen, being a deeply religious person and a pattern for young business men, disliked the color of the conversation. He frowned. "Successful men are generally hated by those who fail. The higher the man the better the target. So it is to-day. Peter Cooper had his enemies."

Ellis Tucker held up a hand. "Oh, come now! There's a limit. You Wall Street sharps liken Peter Cooper to yourselves! Great Scott! As well class George Washington with the Barbary pirates."

Billy Chapman slowly nodded assent. "The comparison, Tucker, is good. Only there is this difference: the Barbary pirates did not look so respectable nor pose as law-abiding citizens."

The Solid Citizen cleared his throat and had directed a withering frown toward the last speaker when the Railroad King struck the table with his fist, exclaiming:

"But where, where in the name of all the devils, is Payson? He knew the importance of this business. Is he dead or is he drunk?"

"Possibly dead," said Billy; "nothing surprising in that, being a millionaire. But drunk, never."

"Well, stranger things might happen."

"Nothing stranger *could* happen."

The Owner of Coal Mines laughed. "That's right, Billy. Stand up for your absent friend."

"I am only giving you facts," insisted Billy Chapman. "In the first place, Payson hates whisky; secondly, it disagrees with him and he can't take it. He couldn't get a jag if he wanted to. If you ever see Payson drunk, I'll eat him."

As these words were uttered a door opened—the entrance door from the great hall—and a person entered. This person stood with his back against the closed door, one hand resting on the knob. Short, slight, with a clean-shaven face, he wore a derby hat several sizes too large, so large that it covered the back of his head and entirely concealed his ears. The brim of this hat, behind, met and overlapped the hunched up collar of an overcoat that was also several sizes too large for its diminutive wearer. This overcoat fitted so loosely about the neck as to serve as a frame, like a horse collar, for his face. The figure as a whole resembled a certain form of scarecrow that consists of any old hat, overcoat and trousers hanging on a hoe handle. As he stood leaning against the door, this little man opened his mouth and sang, or rather tried to sing—in a weak, un-

even, discordant and thoroughly unsatisfactory voice:

> "In the spring a yurrung man's farrancy
> Lighrightly turruns to thorruts of lorruve."

And while the five gentlemen at the table were staring in surprise, the newcomer removed his hat and tossed it recklessly across the room. It struck the stately legs of the portrait above the mantel and rebounded to the floor. Then it was noticed that the hair of the newcomer, which was plastered in complete disorder about his temples, seemed very wet. So distinctly comic was the whole effect of this little figure that when the hat went sailing across the room, the Owner of Coal Mines laughed aloud.

But the Solid Citizen frowned. "Well, sir, what do you want in here?"

The little man made no reply, but advanced with defiant air, but wavering steps. Plainly he was under the influence of liquor.

"What is it, anyway?" demanded the lawyer.

"Second comic from some Bowery museum, I guess," suggested the Owner of Mines. "Mighty good, too!"

But Billy Chapman, on that side of the table, had risen and was leaning forward with a hand

on the back of his chair. He exclaimed in a barely audible voice:

"Payson!"

The little man smiled, nodded, and dropped into the nearest chair, the one next to Billy. As he settled down, his head sank lower still into the yawning collar of the overcoat. There was something, however, in the white face that discouraged mirth.

"Payson!" repeated the Railroad King.

"Payson!" echoed Mr. Tucker; then the others in turn.

"That's my name," and the new arrival nodded, as his blinking eyes moved laboriously over the group. "How comfortable and dry you all look. But p'raps I'm too late. Couldn't help it."

Then, turning to Chapman: "Am I too late, Billy?"

"No, not too late. But what on earth has happened to you, old man?" And he laid a hand on Payson's shoulder. "Where did you get those awful clothes?"

"I gottum from Levi—Klowschoski Koschowlski. Levi Schlos kowski, that was it. Levi Schklos-howski. Lil bittoffer—shop near the wharf."

"But what became of your own clothes?"

"Wet. Cold, soppin' freezin' wet. Had to change 'em."

"Why?"

"P'raps you never stood—roundabout in the—street—much in winter with your underclothes freezin' to your—to your—skin. What?"

"How did you get so wet? It hasn't been raining."

"You can be—'stremely wet after crawling out of the—Hudson River, Mr. Bill Chapman—even on a—dry night."

"Out of the river?"

Mr. Payson nodded, scowled, rubbed the base of his brain gently with one hand, and leaned back in his chair. Then in a lower voice: "I shtill see everything double, damn it!"

"Did you fall in?" inquired Billy.

For an instant Payson regarded him in silence, evidently in a painful effort to control his thoughts. "Very likely. That ish I er dunno."

The Railroad King laughed. The Solid Citizen shrugged his shoulders. In his present condition Mr. George Payson was, to his assembled friends, an amazing revelation. When himself which, heretofore, he had always remained his manners were somewhat formal and his language punctiliously correct.

"'Scuse me, gentlemen, if I 'pear late'n a—liller bit loose in these clothes—but—but—freezing Jupiter! I had a—a death's own offle chill. And the quanerties—large quan erties of water I swallowed! An' then therg -therg—allon of cheap whisky to get warm again. Gessenny—body—would be drunk."

The Owner of Coal Mines laughed. "Don't mention it, old man! We have all had those chills."

"No, you haven't! You may've had chills, but—not—not like mine. You wouldn't be here now. Fools!"

There were indications of a suddenly aroused anger. As his eyes swept the assembled company he added, rapidly:

"Fools! Unsym -thetic fools! Comf't—ble, money-making unsuspect—ing fools. Your turn'll come nex'. I hope 'twill."

Billy laid a hand on his shoulder and muttered soothing words.

The visiting lawyer stood up. "Pardon me, gentlemen, but would it not be well for Mr. Payson to sign his name at once to these papers? We have no time to lose."

"Surely, surely!" said Ellis Tucker. "Come, Payson, can you look over these things—or shall I read them to you?"

Mr. Payson frowned. "Dunno. P'raps I couldn't."

The various documents which had been laid together all ready for his signature were now placed before him.

"This," said Mr. Tucker, taking the uppermost sheet, "is the bond we give to "——

"Hush! Oh, hush!" exclaimed Payson, holding up a hand. "Never mind what they are! I'll sign anything that Billy Shapman says is all right. Hey, Billy?"

Billy smiled, and showed him where to sign. "Right there, old man."

Mr. Payson wrote his name in the space indicated, slowly, and with obvious labor. Mr. Tucker applied the blotter. "It doesn't look much like your usual signature, Payson. But we can all swear to it."

Mr. Payson laughed a maudlin laugh. "Give me another. Han' 'em along quick. Is this one all right, too, Ber—lilly?"

"Yes, that's all right."

"Ash fer you, Billy, yer the only—only—honest baby in the bunch."

Again the millionaire wrote his name, slowly, as before.

"Gimme another. And be ker—be mighty

quick about it as I'm gett'n' swimmyer—every minute. Is this'n all right, ole Billy?"

"Yes, sign here, just above mine."

As the name was being written, in a somewhat solemn silence, the Solid Citizen remarked to the Railroad King:

"I thought Payson never drank."

"He never does. I don't understand it."

"Too bad!" said the Solid Citizen. "Too bad!"

But the writer overheard. He dropped his pen and stood up. Shaking a finger toward the Solid Citizen at the opposite side of the table, he exclaimed:

"Too bad! Too bad, is it, you damned old fool! When I—I—I want your sym'thy I'll ask fer it. Green-faced idiot!"

The Solid Citizen looked aghast. Such language from Mr. George Payson—the ever tactful, the courteous, always considerate George Payson—struck him dumb; and to him the Solid Citizen, the oldest member of the party, the pillar of the church, the shining light! The others, also, were amazed.

"Come, Payson," said Mr. Tucker soothingly; "here is the next one. Just sign there, please."

"Shall I sign it, Billy?"

"Yes, it's all right."

Again the name was written. "The rest of you," he said, looking around the table, "are such a shwarm of sharps that—that 'cept Billy, I don't trust one er—yer. Not one. No, sir. Not one! Billy, you are th' only—straight thing in the gang! The only white man in the settlement."

Billy smiled and nodded. "Thank you, old man. Now, sign here."

After this further effort Mr. Payson frowned and leaned back. He glanced suspiciously at the several men who were watching him.

"How do I know but I'm signing away everything I own? I know yer all. Leading citizens. Ha, ha! Leading tadpoles!"

His glance falling again upon the Solid Citizen seemed to rekindle his wrath.

"Old cockroach! Gray-whiskered –wa—water bug! You go to chursh every Sunday'n now you come down here ter ss—steal a franchise."

The Solid Citizen pressed his lips together. The other men smiled.

"How much did you clear the other day by that slump in your rotten old scheme? Yes, 'bout a million dollars. And how the lille shtock holers do love you! You did scoop 'em!"

The Solid Citizen tried to smile. "Well, I have known you to profit by a change in the market yourself."

"But I don't go to church'n ashk a bless'n on it! I may be a gambler, but I don't claim partnership with th' Almighty."

Raising himself from his chair and resting one hand on the table, he extended the other toward the Solid Citizen, exclaiming with dramatic ferocity:

"What business have *you* alive? That chap from the comi—commi—ty of seven with the gold teeth—he put the cross to your name—before he saw me. Didn't they even *try* for you? What?"

The Solid Citizen frowned. Then, with an obvious effort, smiled, and shook his head.

"Ha!" exclaimed Payson, leaning further forward and with increasing contempt in voice and manner. "You've welched. You've knuckled to the pleepurs the pleeple's league thash what you've done. You've gone back on me and on your word. Ha!—look at his face!"

And truly, over the Solid Citizen's face had come a sudden transformation. Anger, shame, guilt - whatever the cause, his complacent look of outraged dignity had collapsed. He raised a hand

to his mouth. He laughed. He lowered, then raised his eyes, then lowered them again.

He was convicted of something; but of what, no one present knew save Payson.

VII

While we have nothing more to fear from kings, we may yet have trouble enough from commercial monopolies and favored industries marching to the polls their hosts of bribed retainers.—*John Fiske.*

THE friendship between Payson and Billy Chapman which had begun some fifteen years ago became a gentle surprise to those who knew them both. It was, at least, illogical. Payson was a self-made man, sharp, hard at a bargain, cold, but fair-minded and always reasonable, punctiliously honest with his friends, but of adaptable conscience in impersonal matters. Billy had inherited his money, was indifferent "soft" as Payson called it—at a bargain, warm-hearted, impulsive and inconveniently honest at unexpected moments.

Payson, no matter under what circumstances he had started in life, would have climbed and prospered. But, had Billy Chapman started poor, he would probably have remained poor, and certainly would have remained happy. His conscience, although somewhat worn in spots by

twenty years of high finance, was still firmer than the rock of ages, and often a nuisance to his more ambitious associates. Payson was a snob by instinct. He knew it, however, and fought against it. Billy, from his hat to his shoes, was democratic and ignored class distinctions.

Payson, while positive in speech and manner, a hard worker and of regular habits, took few things seriously. Billy, jovial, easy going, and ever ready to give up work for play, often startled his companions by a strength of conviction which no human argument could alter.

With Payson it required time to form a friendship. With Billy all mankind and all womankind—were ready and glad to be his friends. But he preferred Payson to all others. And Payson would have laid down his life for Billy.

Half an hour after the meeting just recorded Billy Chapman, in an electric cab, was spinning rapidly up-town, the drowsy Payson at his side. Conversation on this trip was fitful. In an alcoholic, fragmentary manner, Payson related his experience of the evening. Billy found it hard to believe that Whittaker, his own private secretary, whom he had known and trusted a dozen years, should prove an accomplice in Payson's murder. He tried in vain to ascribe a motive.

"Are you sure, old man, absolutely sure, that it was Whittaker who met you and led you along the wharf?"

"Course I am. Don't I know Whittaker? Stall pigeon, with the red head an black soul."

"But it might have been some one else gotten up to resemble him."

"Look here! I—was sober then. Am I a fool sober—or—orram—ram I not? Mistaken yer—yer—fool self!"

After periods of silence, the invalid's tongue would vibrate with careless freedom.

"Wha's all this?" he asked in one of these awakenings.

"Madison Square."

"Oh, I'd forgotten 'twas so—so—so many."

Billy smiled. "Yes, it's quite a number. Especially at night."

"Well, Madison Square goes, but"—— then he cursed, with startling fluency, the Solid Citizen. "Have yenny idea what a lying, cow—oward he is, that pious old—old—pumpkin?"

"What has he done?"

"Well—you've met the man with the see-saw teeth?"

"The *what* teeth?"

"The crooked, odd and even—any old teeth—mostly gold. Met him?"

"No, I think not."

"Never met the—angel of death?"

"Not yet."

"Good for you! Lucky boy! Well, he's it all right. Holds you up. Holds you up for a pile. Pay your money or or get knocked on the head —like a—a—ox—pig anything. He means business, too. Well—well—pious old sidewhiskers—swore he'd stand it out. Promise each other. Shook hands—on it. So—they killed me but—but—he's alive—and pious and—sober, and still smiling. Damn him!"

As David Armstrong had also alluded to the man with the gold teeth, Billy Chapman's curiosity increased.

"Tell me, did this man with the teeth hold you up on the street?"

But George Payson had already tired of that subject. His head inclined wearily on his friend's shoulder, as he murmured, indifferently, "Well—I—spose anything. Nobody—cares much."

In silence they rolled up Fifth Avenue. At Forty-second Street they came to a stop. With the cessation of movement the slumbering millionaire awoke.

"Who is it? Wha's happened?"

"Nothing. Only waiting for a car to pass."

"I say—where are we going?"

"To your house."

"To my house! Well but wha'll my wife say? She's never seen like me like this. No. Never seen her Georgie like this. Don't you know I'm drunk, you—fool?"

"Yes, but I 'phoned her before we started. Told her just how it happened. She understands."

"Billy, I sometimes think—almost think—you're a gen'leman."

After a short silence: "A woman should not despise her husband. Rem—ember—that. Never be drunk—to—your wife. Hey?"

"Yes, that's right."

"But you—why—Great Scott! don't you know that—you haven't got any wife? She died years ago."

"Yes, I know."

After another pause: "But, look here. I say, you ought to—have one."

"Very likely."

"Yes. Oh, certain! And she'd have you, too, I—guess. Le's hope she will. She's a spur—spur—lendid thing."

"Who?"

"And you're a—a good enough feller. Girls would marry you."

"What girl are you trying to talk about, George?"

"Why, of course!"

"Who?"

"Oh, come off! You know."

"No, I don't."

"I mean that awful awful handsome—what is it?"

"Couldn't tell you."

"Train' nurse. You've got her at—home."

For the darkness that hid the color now coming to his face Billy Chapman was grateful. Here were his innermost, secret thoughts unearthed by this half conscious companion thoughts that he himself had not recognized officially. And now, in the gloom, Billy Chapman, widower, forty years old, was blushing like a girl!

"Chappy Billman! Take her before she's gobbled up. Other feller'll get her. She's not the fruit to der der angle every every lasting on the—tree. Lovely woman!"

Mechanically Billy murmured, "Yes, she's an attractive person."

"'Tractive! Gad! She's a masterpiece. Betcern anybody. Dam sight more use than—than—gilded pills like us. Hey? Is it?"

"It is, old man."

"What is?"

"Whatever you say."

"Wha'd I say?"

"You ought to know."

"I—I don't know everything."

"You know a good deal."

"Yes, but nobody knows everything. That is no—no one per erson can—well, let it go't that. I don't care much anyway." Thereupon he fell into a slumber that lasted until the vehicle stopped at his own door.

From Payson's house to Billy's the walk was short; and the activity of Billy's own mind along the quiet street was a surprise to himself. Those last, befuddled words seemed to have rekindled the smouldering fires of youth. In recalling them —and they were words which would never have been uttered in sobriety—Billy remembered there was "truth in wine." Marry Miss Wilson! Now, he realized, as if suddenly awake, that he had been intending, almost unknown to himself, to do that very thing. And his taking for granted that the matter rested wholly upon his own decision was the natural result of vast, hereditary wealth combined with the positive knowledge that one or two desirable women would be his for the asking. So, when he unlocked his own front door and entered

the hall, he experienced a sudden depression of spirit, mingled with resentment, at hearing from the smaller reception room Miss Wilson's voice in conversation with a man. A suitor! Perhaps already engaged. Why not? Even Payson, drunk, had said she was not the kind to dangle long, unplucked, from the matrimonial bough. For reasons simple of analysis he felt a sudden humiliation. As to the man—the lover, suitor, future husband, whatever his title he knew—almost hoped for an instant—that the fellow was unworthy.

Upon entering the hall, and before the closing of the door announced his presence, he heard her exclaim:

"It's all a horrid business! Such sacrifice, for what may be an error!"

Then, as the front door closed, she came out into the hall. This hall, of white and yellow marbles, with its fountain of bronze cupids, was now in a subdued, soft light.

"Oh! Mr. Chapman, may I present my father to you?"

Billy's face brightened. So it was no suitor! He drew a breath of relief. The honest joy with which he shook Mr. Wilson's hand caused the visitor a mild but grateful surprise. A trifle more

enthusiasm in the greeting and Mr. Wilson might have believed himself a long-lost uncle. Billy found his visitor a man of prepossessing exterior. While his dark eyes resembled those of his daughter, they lacked the gentleness of the younger face. His head was more rugged; his mouth less sensitive. He was more of the ancient Roman type—Brutus or Cato. And when he spoke, his deep, calm voice strengthened the impression of a forceful and, perhaps, uncompromising nature. The eyes, nevertheless, were benevolent.

Miss Wilson was obviously pleased with her parent's most cordial reception. "Mr. Chapman, papa is one of the best men in the world, and most sensible. Would you think such a parent could be a socialist?"

Billy smiled. "Oh, yes! Everything seems possible nowadays."

As one who enjoys a joke, Mr. Wilson replied, with a smile: "I am sorry you find my daughter such a disloyal Christian."

"Why, father! What do you mean?"

"Christ, you know, was an extreme socialist. He went further, much further, than we think of going to-day. And I am naturally mortified that you should repudiate Him."

"He a socialist!" she exclaimed.

In a meditative voice, scarcely audible, Billy Chapman murmured: "That is true! He did go further."

"Even so," she went on, "socialists nowadays are classed with anarchists—and everything that's horrid. Cranks –that's what everybody considers you."

"Everybody?"

"The most respectable people."

He smiled, and shook his head. "The most respectable people considered our Saviour a crank; and they had their opinion, also, of Socrates, Galileo, Martin Luther and George Washington."

"But they were not agitators, bomb-throwers, anarchists."

"I don't know," said Billy. "Most of them went as far as they could. They were as troublesome as they knew how to be in their respective lines. But they were in a different class from the famous Committee of Seven we have with us. Judging from results, they seem an efficient body of assassins."

Mr. Wilson frowned, then raised his eyebrows and for an instant his calm eyes rested upon Mr. Chapman, while considering the form of a reply. "Assassins are not overpopular. It is not a lovable trade. But there have been one or two

emergencies in history when even assassination has helped the world's progress. In Russia, for instance; and quite recently."

"Possibly, but we do not envy the murderer."

"Nor do we envy the surgeon in amputating a friends's limb."

As Mr. Wilson spoke, and he spoke dispassionately—with a smile Billy happened to glance into the daughter's face. In her dark eyes he found a troubled, almost appealing look. He hastened to avert an argument.

"As your daughter, Mr. Wilson, is the salvation of our little family, we forgive anything in an erring father, even"—adding, with a light laugh—"if he is a deeper villain than Socrates or George Washington."

Mr. Wilson smiled. Laying a hand affectionately upon the arm beside him: "It is sometimes hard for thoughtless parents to live up to a daughter's standard, even if she is not a Christian."

"Oh! Don't say that!"

He smiled. "But you have time to reform." Then, turning to Billy: "May I ask, Mr. Chapman, if you are a Harvard man?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind telling me your class?"

Billy gave the year.

"Then you may have known a Mr. William Jones?"

"William Jones?" and Billy closed his eyes in an effort to recall the person. "William Jones. Was he in my class?"

"No. And I find no record of him in any other class at that time. But he was there, for I met him."

"A student?"

"I believed so at the time. He did me a great service; in fact, turned the whole current of my life. I have been searching for years, as I wish at least to express my gratitude and repay the debt."

"And if papa fails to unearth him," said Miss Wilson, "I shall have to find a substitute. This search has become the chief aim of his existence."

"Well, I may have to forego him but shall not forget him."

"Nor I either," added the daughter. "Rescuing angels are not easily forgotten."

"William Jones," repeated Billy. "What sort of a looking man was he?"

With a light laugh Miss Wilson replied, glancing at her father, "We don't know! We have never seen him in the light of day. He was young, about twenty, and that's all we are really sure of."

"You might add," said her father, "to render

identification yet more difficult, that in height, size and figure, there was nothing unusual."

"Well," said Billy, "it does look hopeless. You have the consolation, however, of knowing he enjoys the memory of a good deed. Does he know *your* name?"

"I think so. But I have discovered that when a John Wilson is hunting for a William Jones names count for little."

An hour later, as Billy in his luxurious bed, closed his eyes for sleep, he murmured once again, "By Jove! He *was* a socialist!"

VIII

Rich soils are often to be weeded.
—*Lord Bacon.*

FAME is no moral teacher.

The man who robs a bank is more likely to see his portrait in the paper than he who watches by the bedside of a dying friend. Anecdotes of ladies with a shocking past are better travelers than purer tales. When Florence Nightingale is long forgotten the name of Catherine de Medici will echo through the halls of fame. And as the movements of a burglar are of more popular interest and divert a larger audience than the movements of a trained nurse, so the triumph of a gambler excites a wider interest than the duller doings of the agriculturist.

And fame had come to Billy Chapman and his playmates in "The Game." Their names were often in the mouths of other citizens; their portraits were familiar to the public. Billy Chapman himself, designed by nature for a different career, still felt the prickings of a surviving conscience.

Had he been reared under different conditions — less affluent and less conventional he would have been a "crank": that is, he would have been guided oftener by his own convictions, allowing his moral courage a freer chance to develop. Incidentally he would have enjoyed a closer acquaintance with the Golden Rule. He realized that he had suffered a civic deterioration. Nevertheless, in the futherance of financial schemes it was continually expedient to "fix" a legislature, to "see" a judge, to ignore the statutes and to put occasional rivals out of business. And all for the excitement and the triumphs of "The Game."

But to him, the sort of glory that came with all this, while enjoyed by his fellow magnates, was not wholly welcome. He well knew that an unjust proportion of the nation's treasure was flowing to favored pockets; that these stupendous fortunes were captured, not earned; that in this game between rich and poor the dice were loaded. He and his class were fully aware that this dazzling, golden flood was unwilling tribute, and that mutterings were clearly heard. But from the shorn lamb there is little to fear. The law, when a captive in golden chains, has no terror for its owners.

So, during the next day, with certain remarks

of Ellis Tucker fresh in his mind, Billy reflected when business allowed. Toward the end of the afternoon, two lawyers and a mining engineer left his private office after a lengthy interview. There had been much talk and reading of documents pertaining to an enterprise in which the prospective profits were enormous. But the enterprise itself promised no unusual risk or excitement, and the interview -for Billy had been a trifle tiresome.

As the door closed on the mining engineer, who was the last to disappear, Billy looked at his watch.

Five minutes of four.

He glanced through the window, up over the opposite skyscraper, and studied a fragment of dull, December sky. Snowflakes, beginnings of a heavy storm, tumbled leisurely toward the street beneath. Recalling nothing of importance that needed his personal attention, he decided to go to the riding club. He needed a little exercise. As this decision was made, Whittaker, his private secretary, entered from the outer office and presented a card. With Payson's startling story of the night before fresh in his mind, Billy studied Whittaker's face for an instant before looking at the card. Whittaker was a young man

not over thirty, with red hair, a fresh complexion, clear brown eyes and an honest face. He met the searching look with his customary calmness and respectful attention. Before asking the question that was on his lips, Billy realized that Payson was not himself when telling his tale the night before, and that it was only fair to Whittaker to postpone any serious accusation until the accuser was sober. In fact, as he looked into his secretary's eyes he felt ashamed of having doubted him—of having accepted Payson's drunken tale.

Turning to the card in his hand, he read,

Mr. Edward Fowler

"Who is it?" he asked.

"A gentleman who says you made an appointment with him—on a personal matter."

Billy frowned in an effort to remember.

"Well—show him in."

Mr. Fowler, a tall man with good features, and a dry, somewhat leathery skin, seemed, at first glance, a solemn person. In conversation, however, he lightened up, smiled readily, and the many wrinkles about his eyes and mouth became lines of mirth instead of sadness. The brown face, while hard and bony in its general effect, was kind, intelligent and attractive. Billy had seen it before. But he could not remember where.

His memory for names and faces was good, but he could not identify this one.

Mr. Fowler removed his hat, placed it on a neighboring chair and drew his own chair nearer the open table which Billy used as a desk. Taking a few papers from a pocket, he said with an agreeable—and what seemed an habitual smile:

"Mr. Chapman, the object of my visit I will state in the fewest words, as I know how valuable your moments are."

Upon the table he laid a typewritten list of about a hundred names.

"That is a list of American millionaires, most of whom you know."

Billy took up the paper. Mr. Fowler waited in silence until the list was scanned. It was alphabetically arranged, and among them Billy read his own name. Many were personal friends. It seemed a list of the richest men in the country. Against half a dozen of the names were little black crosses. Raising his eyes to his visitor's face, he said:

"Well?"

Mr. Fowler's clean-cut mouth was large and rather flexible. As his lips parted with a smile to reply, Billy was inwardly startled. He felt a tingling up his spine and through the roots of his hair, for several of Mr. Fowler's teeth were of gold.

He remembered Payson's words, "the man with the teeth of gold is the angel of death."

To conceal a slight tremor of his fingers—coming more from anger than from fear—he laid the paper upon the desk.

"That is a list of men," said Mr. Fowler, "whom we are asking to contribute to the People's League. Perhaps you have heard of it?"

The change in the millionaire's face was not lost upon his visitor. The smiling eyes had become colder and distinctly hostile. The frank, almost boyish face, and the genial, simple, friendly manner all had undergone a sudden transformation.

Billy raised his chin and looked his visitor calmly in the eye. The look was defiant. Mr. Fowler's smile abated, but without completely vanishing.

"My errand is a disagreeable one, Mr. Chapman. Nothing could be more so. But I have no choice in the matter."

"Don't waste words. State your business."

"My mission is to ask you to subscribe two hundred thousand dollars to the People's League. Most of the men on that list have already given."

"And if I decline?"

"Against your name is placed a cross."

Billy glanced mechanically at the crosses. His

heart beat faster at the discovery that four of the names with the small black crosses were those of Waldo Greene, David Armstrong, John B. Stockton and George Payson. The other two were wealthy men of other cities whose unexplained death within a fortnight had surprised and startled the community. Leaning back in his chair he regarded his visitor in silence.

"Perhaps you are also the assassin who has the pleasure of dispatching us."

Mr. Fowler's smile diminished, but his amiable manner remained.

"No, sir. With that I have nothing to do. I merely explain the purpose of the subscription and see that the case is fairly stated and clearly understood."

"I congratulate you on your line of business, Mr. Fowler. It pays you well, I have no doubt."

"Your sarcasm is misplaced, Mr. Chapman. We sincerely believe we are averting a revolution a popular uprising that would probably result in mob violence, the shedding of blood and the looting of homes."

"Assassination, then, is not violence."

"These deaths by assassination are not compulsory. They are optional. If a wealthy gentle-

man prefers death to relinquishing a small fraction of his fortune the choice is his own."

"Really! Well, Mr. Fowler, I take the assassination. This interview is closed."

And Billy directed a finger toward an electric button on his desk. But Mr. Fowler extended a hand in protest.

"One moment. For your own sake, Mr. Chapman, and that of your family, allow me a few words."

Billy did not withdraw his hand, but allowed his finger to remain upon the button. "Make it short."

"I will. If you decline to subscribe, you know the result. The only six men who have already refused are those with crosses against their names. You know what has become of them. It merely means that your wife or son will give the money. Your death will be a useless sacrifice."

"Excuse me. Not entirely useless. There is a principle represented. A few lives are not thrown away if they help defeat your kind of work."

"That would not be the result, Mr. Chapman. It cannot be defeated. The whole working population is behind it. We are the many against the few. Besides, the rich men who refuse are

less than one in ten. The actual proportion so far is six out of seventy."

"How much money, then, has your league acquired?"

"About eleven millions of dollars—so far."

Billy tightened his lips, withdrew his hand from the electric button and drummed with his fingers upon an arm of his chair.

"The working people of this country, Mr. Chapman, are on the ragged edge of revolt. You rich men, here in the East, have no conception of the bitterness—the deep resentment—at the conditions that result in this unequal distribution of wealth. Those who work the hardest get the least."

"If you can believe that American workmen are worse off than those of other countries, you can believe anything."

"That is not the question. In a country like this, there is plenty for all; plenty of food, clothing, space and fuel, more than enough for everybody. Why should a few have not only the best of it all, but a thousand times more than they can use, while all the others, those who work the hardest, live in attics and cellars, eat the meanest food and never enough? And all in a land of plenty. You will admit there is something radically wrong

when a few are amassing fabulous fortunes, and many, however industrious, can barely live."

"All that is an ancient tale. Every community since history began has had its useless members, its agitators, its paupers and its loafers. I give nothing to your league."

Mr. Fowler smiled and nodded. "An ancient tale, perhaps, but with different actors. They are Americans this time, not peasants. They consider their republic in danger when they become servants of corporations that own the industries of the country and control the whole machinery of government. It is not merely a question of wages—of food, clothes and shelter. And even if it were, our country is the richest in the world, and incredibly prosperous. The American workman has awakened to all this, and demands a share in its prosperity. He doesn't get it, however hard he toils. That is his grievance. If the People's League can raise enough money we can achieve our object by peaceful means. If you give this money you are giving to a cause upheld honestly and seriously by a vast majority of your fellow citizens. And I beg you to believe, Mr. Chapman, that I would not be visiting you to-day upon this repugnant errand—as a highwayman—unless I believed in the cause."

"Every cause, however false, has had firm believers," and Billy looked at his watch as if to end the interview. But his visitor went on, more earnestly:

"I sincerely hope you will change your mind, Mr. Chapman. You fail to realize the extent of this uprising. The People's League represents millions of men of various classes, all determined upon a change. And they are order-loving citizens."

"And anarchists."

"Not one at least, to our knowledge. They and their tribe are not admitted. The People's League, so far as we can make it, consists of law-abiding voters."

Billy indulged in a faint smile. "Law abiding is good. I see you are a humorist."

Mr. Fowler also smiled. "Nothing could be more humorous than your use of our own money to defeat our own votes. We are merely meeting you capitalists on your own ground and with your own weapons. You hold us up with your trusts, your tariffs, your irresponsible and somewhat peculiar management of the people's savings. Is it not better that a dozen or more millionaires should quietly disappear, especially if they prefer death to parting with a fraction of their fortunes, than that mobs should rule?"

"Possibly, but I do not care to discuss my own assassination, however holy the cause."

Billy looked at his watch and straightened up. "We are both wasting time. I shall never give a dollar to a cause that achieves its ends by assassination."

"Just one word more, Mr. Chapman. You think our method brutal. We have no choice. The American magnate disregards the law, for he owns it. He has no fear of public opinion, for he owns the press. The only way of inducing him to take the slightest interest in our affairs is through fear of death. In that he resembles his poorer brothers. By that alone can we reach him. Our cause is good. We need a fraction of his money, just a small return of some of our own earnings. Hence the People's League."

"In securing laws to suit you, is it a part of your amiable system to assassinate the President of the United States, his Cabinet and the leading members of Congress?"

"No, sir. We mean to elect the next President, if votes and money can do it. With ten millions of voters, out of the fourteen millions, and seventy millions of dollars as a campaign fund, we feel some confidence in success. As for the United States Senate,"—here Mr. Fowler's gold teeth

were again in evidence, when he added with a generous smile, "they are easy fruit. Those gilded patriots bear the same relation to Wall Street as a yellow dog to a butcher's cart."

"Your President, I suppose, will be some walking delegate; your Congress, the choicest spirits of the poor house and your Chief Justices, retired assassins."

Billy, as he spoke and his manner of speech was impatient—pushed back his chair and stood up.

Mr. Fowler also stood up and replied, pleasantly, "At all events, our Supreme Court will agree to an income tax. Turn about is fair play. It seems an innocent plan to tax the millionaire for the benefit of the working man, instead of taxing the working man for the benefit of the millionaire."

Now, this sentiment had been expressed more than once by Billy himself in arguments about an income tax, but his face at the present moment showed no sympathy either with Mr. Fowler or his speech. Toward those identified with the murder of his friends, his detestation would be open and enduring. No friendly argument—on any subject—was possible.

"Please think this matter over, Mr. Chapman. You may change your mind. I shall be glad to call any day or hour you name."

'My decision is final. Good-day, sir."

Mr. Fowler bowed, and as he took his hat from the neighboring desk the door opened and another man entered. The newcomer was George Payson.

IX

Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labors.—*King Solomon.*

THE Payson who now entered bore no resemblance to the drunken Payson in farcical outfit of the previous evening. To-day his raiment was above reproach. The trim little figure stood erect as ever. Of his extraordinary experience of the night before no traces were visible except a darker color beneath the eyes. To those who knew him his face might have appeared a trifle paler than usual.

After a familiar nod to Billy his eyes encountered those of Mr. Fowler. Payson's figure stiffened. His chin rose a little higher. For an instant he surveyed the other man with half-closed eyes and elevated brows.

"So *you* are here?"

Mr. Fowler's only reply was a slight movement of the head. Payson added, slowly and with obvious contempt:

"The usual errand, I suppose."

Again Mr. Fowler's only response was a silent and a barely perceptible acknowledgment. Payson looked toward Billy.

"The gentleman demands a check, or your life?"

"That's the game."

"Well, Mr. Fowler, you certainly know your business, for you are still out of state's prison. It's a jolly trade you are in. Perhaps you were one of the gentlemen who knocked me into the river last night."

"No, sir, I was not."

"Ah? Then, perhaps, you were the enthusiastic patriot who threw the paving-stones at me when I was trying to swim?"

"I was not there at all, Mr. Payson. I knew nothing about it."

"Knew nothing about it! Knew nothing about the fulfillment of your own threat?"

"I tell you, Mr. Payson, I have nothing to do with that end of the business."

"Of course not! Who could doubt the word of a gentleman in your calling!"

A flush moved swiftly over Mr. Fowler's face. With compressed lips, he drew a hand across his chin. But he was resolved to keep his temper,

Calmly, but in a harder voice, he said, "I am sorry you have such a poor opinion of me. But, at least, my pockets are not bulging with other people's money."

"Then," said Payson, "you are failing in your enterprise. But your hands are dripping with other people's blood."

"Perhaps you will admit, Mr. Fowler," said Billy, with exaggerated courtesy, "that there is something amusing in a gentleman of your calling being sensitive on a point of honor."

Mr. Fowler with a gesture of suppressed anger wheeled about and took three strides toward the door. Then, from a sudden change of purpose, halted, retraced his steps and again was standing in the center of the office. Planted solidly upon his feet, and standing erect, he moved his head slowly up and down to emphasize his words:

"You talk of honor! You who would be in prison but for buying your freedom with other people's money. Debauchers of law and justice, so hog-rich with plunder you cannot estimate your wealth. You have the impudence to talk of honor! Why, gentlemen, you are not in the same class with common thieves or with the man who steals for his family because he needs the money. You are a class by yourselves. You skim the

cream from a whole continent. You hold the widow and orphan by the throat. You capture the savings of the poorest worker. And on what a scale! Never was there record of such unholy fortunes. Blind drunk with it—and still thirsty! So blind drunk that you can't see where you are going. So secure in your ownership of men and laws that you sneer at danger. Did rulers ever believe that a revolution was at hand? But the uprising is here—at your own homes inside your doors. Even now you don't believe it."

In the fading light of the winter afternoon Mr. Fowler's tall figure seemed to grow taller still as he straightened up and said, in a tone yet more emphatic:

"When a man works ten hours a day to lay up something for his family, it doesn't soothe him to know that his savings, if not stolen, are manipulated by his enemies to their own swinish enrichment."

"Enemies?" said Billy, gently.

"Yes, enemies. The war is now on. We may as well be frank. Enemies you are, not friends. Friends would not gorge themselves with the hard earnings of the poor. We know our savings yield you a thousand times more money in a day than we can earn by a life of labor. We know why

THE MODERN SAMSON

some of our own productions are sold cheaper abroad than we can buy them ourselves in our own country. Oh, yes! Precious friends, you millionaires! You have the people well in hand –a lemon in a squeezer. You own the air, the earth and the mines beneath. Yes, and who pays for the coal strikes? Do you pay? You, the owners? Oh, no! You put up the price of your coal and tax the poor, the sick, the shivering women in the tenements. We all pay the tax, until you are richer than before—already so gorged with money that your senses are besotted. What sort of groveling, patient, humble-minded things do you take us for we, the American people?"

In silence Billy closed his eyes. Payson glowered and twirled his cane—but also in silence. For the crude force of the speaker commanded—and held -attention. Moreover, both men were impressed by the obvious sincerity of this messenger from the waking giant.

"We are tired of being fooled and fleeced of getting a crumb after baking the loaf. We are tired of fattening financiers. For us, no more of this control of our savings by irresponsible gamblers. We want, and we propose to have, the things for which our ancestors fought at Lexington. They threw off one set of kings and you have

saddled us with another and a damned sight worse. We don't ask our money back. You can keep it. But we do ask for the future a fraction of the profits on our own earnings. And, by God, we are going to have it! We are tired of the ditch. We have climbed the bank to have it out with you."

Billy sank lower in his chair, rested his chin in his fist, his eyes on the speaker's face. He was reminded of certain things that Ellis Tucker had said. Ellis Tucker had been sarcastic and amusing. But these sentiments, while similar, were not amusing. And they were direct from the enemy. They were official.

Payson tapped a leg impatiently with his cane. "Well, I also am tired: tired of being murdered and then abused for it."

"Really!" And the speaker's manner revealed a fathomless contempt. "But you are not tired of buying half-grown paupers at the cheapest market. How many hundred children, Mr. Payson, are doing their day's work in your New Jersey factories? I have seen them –crawling to the shops in the early morning. There's no playtime for *them*. But you need the money! By God! I'd ask no hotter hell for you and your wife than to have your own children sold to the same job—

with the same food and wages, the same work and the same hours."

Billy looked toward Payson, who made no reply.

With a gesture that included both of his listeners, Mr. Fowler raised his chin, set back his shoulders and seemed to add more inches yet to his stature.

"And when you combine politics with high finance, you millionaires—then heaven help the honest man! The present government is ideal—*of* the rich, *for* the rich and *by* the rich. It works to perfection. The laws are well enforced against the poor. But we are tired of this feudal system where big thieves never go to jail. Later on we shall see some millionaires behind the bars."

"Unless," said Payson, "the electric chair, in the meantime, gets you and some of your brother assassins."

"Something will get you first, Mr. Payson, and within twenty-four hours. Those who have you in charge seldom fail twice. The finger of fate still points in your direction."

With these few words Mr. Fowler put his hat on his head, strode to the door, opened it and walked away.

X

Then none was for a party—
  Then all were for the state;
Then the great man helped the poor,
  And the poor man loved the great;
Then lands were fairly portioned,
  Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
  In the brave days of old.

—*Horatius.*

PAYSON, still swinging his cane, watched the door with half-closed eyes, thoughtfully, but undisturbed.

Billy, who had sunk far down into his chair, sat with his chin in his hand, silent and attentive. From his cheerful face the sunshine had departed. New thoughts, serious and unwonted, clouded his horizon. From the flowery fields and sunny pastures, where heretofore he had traveled by easy paths, he found himself, of a sudden, in the Valley of the Shadow.

He knew what this visit meant. The startling fate of Waldo Greene, of Armstrong and of Stockton, together with Payson's experience of the

night before, were unforgetable things. Those mysteries were now explained. While not of a nervous nature, Billy experienced a wholesome - but not exaggerated—dread of death. In this respect he was, with the rest of us, the victim of an age in which terror of the grave, from earliest infancy, is carefully instilled and religiously developed: in which death is treated, not as the common lot of all, but as a special punishment for the wicked –or an inexcusable calamity which otherwise might never overtake us. And to thoroughly destroy all remnants of courage and all hope of cheerful resignation this white-winged angel of eternal peace is caricatured as a grewsome skeleton.

While Billy could accept with some philosophy this most common event this inevitable abbreviation of existence—he objected to the manner of it. He objected to being dispatched as an enemy of his country; to being voted a tyrant and murdered as a robber, and all by this immaculate, mysterious, infallible Committee of Seven—composed, in all human probability, of envious and greedy agitators.

Payson laid his hat and cane upon a table. "Quite an interesting gentleman, this Fowler."

Billy nodded, drew a long breath, and sat up. "Yes. But he is half right."

"Possibly. The wrong half, though, is so criminally, brutally and damnably wrong that he ought to be in state's prison."

"He believes what he says; no doubt about that."

Payson studied his companion's face, and came nearer.

"Billy, are you going to change your mind and —contribute?"

"I am not."

Payson smiled. "Do it if you feel like it. Don't let me be the cause of your disappearance. But as for myself, I fight it out as I have begun. If the time has come when I must knuckle to a man like that I am ready for another world. 'Tisn't the money. It's the principle."

Billy held out his hand.

"I am with you. You may count on me."

Payson took the hand and gave it a shake. "Good! It's a bargain. We may never have monuments like some other martyrs, but the cause is just as solid."

Billy smiled, straightened up and closed his eyes. "Now I know what Armstrong meant. I know just what happened to him."

"And to me."

"Yes, and to you. I don't like what Fowler

said about the finger of fate still pointing in your direction."

Payson shrugged his shoulders. "That's only his repartee."

"But I don't like it. By the way, were you trying to say, last night, that Whittaker met you on the wharf and told you the place of meeting had been changed?"

"He did."

"It is hard to believe, old man. Are you absolutely sure?"

"Absolutely. Had he been a stranger I should not have followed him, as I was on my guard. I had received notice from Fowler, you know."

Billy frowned and pulled at his short mustache.

"Then he was practically one of your assassins."

"That is what he was."

"Let's have him in." And Billy pressed twice the electric button on his desk.

Payson turned and moved off toward the other end of the now dimly lighted office.

As Whittaker entered, a flood of light came through the open door, for lights were up in the adjoining room. And so, as the door closed behind him, this private office of Billy's seemed doubly dark to the man who entered.

"Whittaker," said Billy, in his usual tone,

"why did you lend a hand in the attack on Mr. Payson?"

"In the attack on Mr. Payson?"

"Yes."

"I don't understand you, Mr. Chapman."

"You don't know what I mean?"

"No, sir."

"I am referring to last night."

"To last night?"

"Look here, Whittaker, are you going to be frank with me or not?"

"Why, certainly, Mr. Chapman, but I really do not understand you."

Billy drew a long breath as if controlling a rising anger.

"Why did you meet Mr. Payson at the wharf last night and tell him the place of meeting had been changed?"

"I did not see Mr. Payson last night, sir."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, sir; very sure. If I had seen him I should have"

He stopped short in his speech with eyes wide open in a sudden terror.

They had encountered, over Billy's shoulder, a pallid face in a further corner of the room. Whittaker's cheeks had become white, his jaw dropped

and moisture stood out upon his forehead. In a whisper, barely audible, he stammered:

"What—what is—that?"

Billy turned, slowly, and glanced behind him. Then he understood. In the obscurity of a shadowy corner, Payson's white face, all the more ghostly from the dark circles beneath the eyes, stood forth in the surrounding gloom with an unearthly pallor. Even to Billy, who knew the living man was there, the effect was startling. And the specter's gaze rested steadily upon the speechless secretary.

Turning again to Whittaker, Billy regarded him with a faint, contemptuous smile.

"You haven't the nerve for a successful murderer, Whittaker. What do you think you see?"

But his secretary made no reply. The eyes, dilated with terror, the dry, parted lips, the quaking knees and spasmodic breathing promised a mental collapse. Stepping slowly backward, with hands extended as if groping for support, his eyes never moved from the ghostly visage—the face of the man whose death he had witnessed. He was breathing as if in pain. As his heels came in contact with a chair he clutched the arms and fell into it, limp and trembling.

Payson slowly emerged from the obscurity of his corner.

"Excuse my being alive, Whittaker."

Whittaker drew a quivering hand across his mouth, and closed his eyes.

Payson came nearer and stood before him. "When a man is knocked on the head, pushed into a nice, deep river with paving-stones dropped on him as a final precaution, he shows a certain amount of selfishness in reappearing."

Whittaker, with bowed head, remained silent.

"You forgive me?"

The secretary made no reply.

"Perhaps now you will answer Mr. Chapman's question. Why did you assist in that enterprise last night?"

Whittaker looked up at his employer, not with offended innocence now, but with pitiful distress.

"Go ahead. Tell us."

"Well, sir, I" – his voice was weak and he cleared his throat "I did it for the League."

"The People's League?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then your confidence in the holiness of this League," said Payson, "is such that you can help at a murder with a clear conscience?"

"I did not know I was assisting at your murder,

Mr. Payson. My instructions were to meet you at the boat and conduct you to a certain building."

"Touching innocence! And how unsuspecting! You led me around behind those buildings close to the river because it was safer than along the lighted streets?"

"No, sir. I was told to go just that way."

"And of course you suspected nothing?"

"I suspected you might be held up, or kidnapped, but on my honor, sir, I did not suspect murder."

"Hm very mysterious and secretive, your pals of the League your fellow patriots. Jolly comrades. Nice boys to play with. I hope they pay you well for that class of work."

"I receive nothing, Mr. Payson."

"Just did it for the good of the country?"

Whittaker made no answer, but from a slight movement of the eyebrows it was evident he resented the manner of the question. Billy addressed him in a less ironical tone.

"Tell us why you did it, Whittaker. I should really like very much to know. Was it the result of a summons from your League?"

"Yes, sir."

"But is every member of the League expected

to commit crimes that are punishable with death—if the law was enforced?"

"Each one is expected to do his share if called upon."

"Good work," said Billy. "And when my turn comes you will help in dispatching me."

"No, sir. Never that!" And he arose and stood with a hand upon the back of the chair. "When I saw Mr. Fowler here I intended coming in before you left to-night to beg you to do what he asked."

"Then, of course, you knew all about it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do any others in this office belong to your precious League?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anybody in Mr. Payson's office?"

"Yes, sir. And not only in your offices, but in your own homes, among your own servants."

The two millionaires exchanged glances.

"That helps explain," said Billy, "why Waldo Greene, in perfect health on one day, was found dead in his bed the next morning from no accountable cause."

Payson nodded. "Also why Stockton has not been heard from since entering his own carriage night before last." Turning to Whittaker: "Faith-

ful members of the League are presumably in our stables, too, and on our carriage boxes."

Whittaker moved his head in assent.

There was a short silence. For now, in this unexpected light, Billy saw what Payson already knew, that they were in the toils; that their struggle was not against Fowler and a few assassins, but against an institution, a gigantic, invisible, all-pervading enemy a colossus in the dark. To Billy, however, this discovery brought no change of purpose. His word was given. Moreover, Payson was still standing by his guns. David Armstrong, Waldo Greene and Stockton had done the same. As a relief from these reflections he whistled, softly, a favorite waltz.

"If the woods are so full of conspirators," said Payson, "why did not one of my own secretaries meet me at the wharf last night?"

"Well, sir, you can understand that your own men, who at least owe you good service, would—would—could hardly do it."

Billy laughed. "So when my turn comes one of Mr. Payson's men will probably lend a hand. Whittaker, do you realize that you are a sneaking, ungrateful traitor?"

"No, Mr. Chapman, I am not. I should do all in my power to save you. I have not forgotten

what you have done for me and my family. I owe everything to you; so do my wife and child."

Whittaker, in this statement, did not exaggerate; for Billy Chapman, with his usual generosity toward those he liked, had helped not only Whittaker himself through sickness and sorrow, but had supported invalid members of his family and set up a brother in business. So, the look which passed between the two men had a deeper meaning, and brought to his secretary a sharper stab than Payson guessed. And Payson was well aware of his friend's soft heart, his ready benevolence and exceptional liberality.

"Then why did you not tell me about Fowler that I might have him arrested?"

"It would be useless, Mr. Chapman."

"I differ."

"Well, sir, if you had succeeded in having him arrested they would never have taken him far."

"You mean the police are also in the League?"

"Yes, sir. And if brought to trial which I know is impossible—no jury would convict him."

Payson laughed, a short, sarcastic laugh. "A nice, well-ordered community we seem to be living in."

"Do you mean," demanded Billy, "that most of the jury would be members of this conspiracy?"

"Yes, sir; in all probability."

For a moment Billy regarded his secretary in silence, then turned away, put on his hat and overcoat, and the two millionaires departed.

XI

And when a lady's in the case,
You know all other things give place.
—*John Gay.*

GLIDING up-town in Billy's electric, the two friends, after a serious review of Fowler's errand and of Whittaker's treason, remained silent for a period. Each had more than enough to think about.

The air was white with snow, borne swiftly along by a cold, sharp, gusty wind. Drifts had already formed at street corners, and promise of a blizzard was fairly given. As the brougham turned into Fifth Avenue from Washington Square Billy regarded his friend from the corners of his eyes and cleared his throat.

"Old man, do you happen to remember any details of our conversation last night on our homeward voyage?"

Payson nodded. "All of it."

"But you were reasonably—drunk."

"Yes, for me. I can't explain it, as I was never

in just that condition before. Of course, I was drunk; I am not denying that. And I talked like a fool, as I knew all the time. Alcohol affects different people in different ways. I fancy I could never lose my wits completely so long as I was conscious; but one-half my brain was practically sober."

"Then you knew what you were saying at that meeting?"

"Every word."

Billy laughed as he recalled some of Payson's remarks to the Solid Citizen, and he repeated them. Payson snuggled his chin into the fur collar of his coat and smiled. "I felt, when insulting the old rat, that it was good work. I knew very well that I should never dare do it when sober. And so, as I hoped never to be drunk again, I profited by the golden opportunity."

"It was good work. He's a chump."

"And a hog."

"Oh, well," said Billy, "that's nothing. The whole gang of us are hogs according to Tucker. And he's right, worse luck!"

"There's a certain charm to an honest hog, but this man is also a sneak, a trimmer, a Judas, a Pecksniff, a sanctimonious hypocrite, a coward and a liar."

Billy smiled. "That's an unbiased description. But do you confess to realizing at the time what you said to me in the cab on the way home?"

"I do."

"You asked me some rather personal questions —on a very delicate matter."

"I know it." And Payson smiled. "Didn't you like them?"

A slight flush came to Billy's face as he answered: "Well—yes—I didn't object very much."

This time Payson really laughed, nudged his friend, then leaned forward better to see his face.

"Billy, you are only a boy. Every man is, I suppose, under those youthful conditions. I envy you."

After a pause the lover murmured, "It seems rather inconsiderate to ask a woman to take a sudden interest in you just before your assassination."

"But the assassination is not a sure thing. I am going to stir up that detective agency to-night and put them on Fowler's trail before I go to bed."

Another silence, which lasted until they were climbing Murray Hill, when Billy remarked with unwonted solemnity:

"On the whole, I think I *will* ask her, and do it to-night before I am gathered."

"It's a free country."

"For this reason among others. It is a compliment to any woman to have a decent man in love with her."

"Yes, and they are supposed to enjoy offers of marriage."

"There'll be that much gained –for her."

"Besides," said Payson, "it is almost worth the price to be mourned by the handsomest woman in New York. She would give points to Juno."

"But she might not mourn."

"You are too modest, old man. She strikes me as being just the sort of unbusinesslike woman who might cling to your memory and never marry anybody else. I don't want to turn your head, but it is barely possible she would rather live with you on a few millions a year than have a tenth as much and be an independent maiden, widowed spinster, thwarted fiancée or whatever you'd call her."

"And if I am alive to-morrow forenoon," Billy continued, as if to himself, "I will add a line to my will and make her more than comfortable."

"What if she refuses you?"

"She will find the money just as useful."

Payson leaned back in his corner, raised his eyebrows and stole a sidelong glance at his friend.

Little surprises of this kind from Billy were not unusual. George Payson, during the short silence that followed, was admitting to himself, regretfully, that his irritation at being jilted would probably have modified his own generosity. At the present moment he saw, in the lover's eyes, a gentle, far-away look, and he knew that Billy's thoughts were not of himself, but all for the woman he was to leave behind him.

"I think," said Billy, "I will make it an even million. That will bring her about forty thousand a year. Then she needn't be a trained nurse and sit up nights with irritable old ladies."

Payson made no reply. He was trying to fathom the depths of forgiveness now suddenly revealed to him. But he understood, appreciated and envied.

The snowdrifts were rapidly getting deeper. Horses, along the avenue, slipped and struggled, and fell. The cutting, freezing blast gave no signs of abating. Their own machine had difficulty in getting up the hill and more than once came to a standstill. Near Forty-second Street, as they were passing the new library, Billy regarded his companion with a frown.

"What in the devil possessed you to talk about Miss Wilson last night?"

"Malice, I suppose—knowing you were dead in love with her."

"You did not know it. It was a drunken guess."

"A drunken guess! Oh, yes, of course! I had no suspicion of it. Dear me, no! When you sat at directors' meetings with a maudlin smile as you have the last month, forgetting to vote, I supposed, of course, it was because you were too cold—or too hungry! And the other morning, being approached by a homeless dog who desired your acquaintance, you stopped, regarded him in an absent-minded but affectionate way and took out a quarter for him."

Billy leaned back and laughed. "Yes, I remember that. Any more samples?"

"Plenty of them. Last Thursday, while Fairchild was making it clear to us that the two millions we had put into his mine had gone to the devil, you sat and smiled and nodded with your eyes out the window as if it was the happiest news of your life."

"You are an amusing liar."

"Moreover," Payson went on, "there's food for reflection when a man with your household gives up his club every afternoon and goes home to sit by the hour with an old aunt who hates him."

"Oh, come now!"

As it happened there was just enough truth in Payson's statement concerning the aunt to prevent his companion from maintaining a serious face. For this aunt—ninety-one years of age—often gave the impression of enjoying an acrimonious hostility toward the entire human family. In fact, however, these expressions of dislike were mere lapses of a failing intellect. Her affection for Billy was very real, and easily explained. When the rest of the family had disowned her this nephew had taken her under his wing and given her the best of homes. A foolish marriage with a foreign gentleman of high degree had blighted a career that gave every promise of being exceptionally brilliant. It soon resulted, however, in a tarnished reputation and a dissipated fortune. But Billy Chapman, whose gratitude was unquenchable, remembered old times when she had habitually stood between himself and a Puritanical grandfather. Now, that she was old, embittered, contentious, exacting and generally undesirable, she had found a warm welcome and a luxurious home.

"Last week," said Payson, "you informed me that blonde women lacked character and had a washed-out look; that only brunettes were worth considering."

"Never!"

"Which I thought was rather tactful, my wife and daughters all being violent blondes."

"That's a lie. I never said it."

"You did."

"I did not. What sort of a fool are you trying to make me out?"

"The worst kind of a fool—a man over forty who's dead in love."

Again Billy smiled. "Well, what's the harm?"

"None. I envy and respect you for it. But your secret is safe, Billy. I have kept this awful knowledge to myself."

XII

How wonderful is Death!
Death and his brother Sleep.
—*Shelley.*

BEFORE the door of his club, at the corner of Fifth Avenue, Payson got out. Billy went on to his own home.

This club that Payson entered was as aristocratic as was possible in a purely commercial community. Fashionable clubs are not, in the strictest sense, institutes of learning nor homes of science. Their members are not debauched from overdraughts of wisdom. When personal gossip is exhausted, conversation is likely to wander along the easy paths of finance or of politics. At such moments gentlemen whose clothes are good, whose liquor and cigars are above reproach, repeat, with all the outward manifestations of original discovery, opinions they have gathered from the daily press. More enjoyable topics, however, are those relating to tangible things: food, horses, women, tobacco, automobiles and the relative merits of various wines. But the subjects most permanently

satisfying, those that wear the best, are the stock market and recent scandals.

This afternoon, when Payson entered, the conversation of a group of members, owing to the presence of a United States Senator, had soared to dizzier heights. They were now discussing, with fitting solemnity, the game of bridge and the cooking of terrapin. Payson settled himself in a vacant chair in this circle of citizens. They were five in number:

The husband of a Social Leader, who was also father-in-law to a duke.

A highly respectable and once honest United States Senator.

A Partially Reformed Drunkard.

One Promising Youth of Sixty-five years, and Ellis Tucker.

The husband of a Social Leader had just been saying, with some severity, that terrapin when properly cooked was delicious, and when improperly cooked was undesirable. He further enlightened the company by describing, with copious details, how it was sometimes cooked in Baltimore. This gentleman had reason to believe that his opinions would be received with respect. He and his wife were notable persons. To achieve this notoriety they had, for years, worn the best

of clothing and eaten the best of food in the best houses.

Their names were daily in the "Society" columns. No three-dollar shoe or patent medicine had ever been more freely or more successfully advertised. For a citizen and his wife to eat at home or even to go out implies, under ordinary conditions, no unusual talent. But if this citizen and his wife went out or took their nourishment at home the event was boisterously chronicled by society reporters. To persons with a sense of humor this easy fame might cause misgivings. A merciful providence, however, enabled the Social Leader and her husband to accept themselves in a reverential spirit. This was easily accomplished, for, being mentioned only in "Society" columns, they were never subjected to adverse criticism. The resulting complacency meeting with no rebuffs became more and more solid as time went on. God was very good to them.

Payson ordered a whisky and soda. As he gave the order Ellis Tucker was impressed, as usual, by the solemn gravity of the man who received it. Robert had been in the club for years, and Ellis Tucker had always studied him with silent amusement. If the impression con-

veyed by this waiter's face and bearing were correct, he was a marvelous condensation of human wisdom. No earthly intellect could fulfill the promise of so sapient a visage. The calm, heavy lidded eyes seemed withholding from a shallow world an infinity of priceless knowledge. Through them shone clearly the experience of countless ages -the ultimate comprehension of the universe. The gaze of other eyes they met serenely—respectful, yet impassively contemptuous. The remark that "no man could be so wise as Daniel Webster looked" applied to this person. The awful wisdom of his face was perhaps enhanced by its freedom from expression. No emotion, no passion, no pain or pleasure, no hope, despair, no triumph or defeat, had left the slightest trace upon his countenance. Robert's thoughts, if he had any, were for himself alone. Nothing could be more hopeless than trying to divine the contents of his skull by a study of his face. No human physiognomy could be more impervious to external or internal influences.

In the matter of deportment and natural excellence he was so distinctly in a class by himself that Judges, Bishops, Senators and Generals seemed, in his presence, as kittens at the feet of Jove. Your order for whisky and soda, cigars or cock-

tails, he received with benevolent tolerance. And whatever outward ease of manner you might assume, you knew, or felt—or thought you knew—that *he* should give the order and that *you* should bring the drinks.

To-day he seemed paler than usual. Returning a moment later he placed the beverage upon the little table in solemn silence and with imperial dignity. As he moved away Tucker turned to Payson. "If there is anything in heredity, Robert comes from a line of kings, philosophers or stage villains."

Payson smiled. "I have always felt that he owns the club—that he is the rightful heir and may claim it some day and turn the rest of us out."

"If he ever does he will do it well."

In reply to several questions Payson gave his experience of the night before.

"Well," said the United States Senator, "if things have come to this pass it's about time some steps were taken."

The Senator had achieved, in early life, a reputation for wisdom by expressing commonplace opinions in a firm voice and with a tone of authority.

"It is a wonder to me," said the Partially

Reformed Drunkard, "that the under dog has been so long trying his teeth."

"He has got his grip now," muttered Payson.

"Even an unskilled laborer likes to keep his family alive, but he has been so infernally meek, under the tariff, and with all this free immigration taking the bread out of his mouth, that I had begun to lose sympathy for him."

"Are you a socialist?" inquired the Senator with some severity.

"Don't insult him," said Tucker. "Call him anything else."

"Of course, a poor man has no rights," continued the Partially Reformed Drunkard; "we all admit that. We have been proving it for some years. But to see his children shrink out of sight for want of decent food must really be quite annoying."

Noticing that the Senator took out his watch and was finding the present conversation something of a bore, Payson asked him in a casual way if this league of conspirators were at work in Washington.

"I couldn't say," was the reply.

"But I have been told the United States Senate was their richest pasture."

"Possibly."

"Has no one from the Committee of Seven approached you personally?"

There was a barely perceptible hesitancy as the Senator, after a slight elevation of the eyebrows, looked his questioner calmly in the face and answered:

"No."

Payson said nothing, but he knew the Senator had lied. He merely raised his glass to his lips, took a few swallows and leaned back in his chair.

"Well, I suppose it's natural," said the husband of a Social Leader, "for common people, especially in this country, to dislike an aristocracy."

"Aristocracy," repeated Ellis Tucker, "from *aristos*, signifying the best. Is our Smart Set America's best thing?"

"Best thing!" grunted the Partially Reformed Drunkard. "It's the rottenest egg in the basket." And he raised his glass, in salutation, toward the husband of a Social Leader, who happened to be his brother-in-law.

"Always the way," said the Senator. "The capital that develops the resources of the country breeds everything but gratitude."

"Gratitude for what?" inquired Ellis Tucker. "It is not the resources of a country you develop. It's the profits. If you are interested in resources

there's plenty of country to develop right here in New York City. Lay out more playgrounds for the children of the poor on the East Side. That scheme has never interested capital."

The Senator smiled. "Oh, you are looking for the millennium!"

"Well, the millennium is here if we can digest one million new immigrants every year. Since you are so fond of that kind of population you might, at least, give their countless, underfed progeny an occasional breathing space."

"Apropos of which," said the Partially Reformed Drunkard, "did I ever happen to tell you about Aleck Hopper and his cheap labor scheme?"

"No. Go ahead."

Whereupon the Partially Reformed Drunkard told the story, an actual occurrence, of

The Yankee and the Bees

One Aleck Hopper, who lived near Marion, in the State of Massachusetts, started in his rowboat, of a pleasant day, to take a hive of bees along the edge of Buzzards Bay to his own home. Aleck was sharp at a bargain. He had bought the hive cheap and he amused himself, as he rowed, by remembering how little it would cost him to feed the critturs and how persistently they would work.

The Silent War

Things went serenely for a while. But whether the unfamiliar swaying of their residence excited suspicion among the bees or whether they became victims of that nausea which disgruntles so many humans when afloat no one knows with certainty. Certain it is, however, that one or two of the passengers came forth to reconnoiter. And they came in a questioning spirit. After a brief survey of the watery scene around about and a silent consultation, they hovered in a disquieting manner about Aleck's face. Their many voices, soothing under favorable conditions, seemed now to be the humming of war songs—the chanting of threats; melodious, but determined. They seemed to be suggesting, in their own language, the propriety of an explanation. As they became more and more neighborly Aleck's nervousness increased.

He perspired freely. It was clear his guests were losing confidence. And, if he could judge by tone of voice and general bearing, they were damning his boat, his purpose, his methods and himself. He dared not beat them off, for that would be a declaration of war. And what a war! One man without a weapon against an armed force of a thousand; a thousand hot heads and hotter tails, and of time-honored courage. No, he could only yearn for the shore, now half a mile

away. He rowed as he never rowed before. And as he bent to his oars he shook his head to discourage the landing of the enemy, but gently, that he might not offend them.

Other inmates of the hive, hundreds at a time, also came forth, and they, too, seemed bent on a closer acquaintance with him. But the moment came when tact, diplomacy, caution, further patience or any display of human wisdom was of no possible use. And it came with the sudden insertion in the back of his neck of what seemed to Aleck about three inches of a red-hot needle. He jumped with the pain, and by an instinctive movement brushed away that skirmisher.

The signal of war had been given. Wild with the unbearable agony of other stabs, Aleck jumped to his feet and tried to beat off his enemies. But no struggle was ever more unequal. His face, neck, hands and body were hot with burning thrusts. The very sky seemed black with the singing, stinging host. From the little door of the hive they poured forth in regiments. With Aleck, already crazed by the agony that has deprived many victims of reason and of life, the decision was easily made between his present torture and a painless drowning in the cool water beneath. Over the side of the boat he plunged. And he dove deep.

"Did he get to shore?" asked the Promising Youth of Sixty-five.

"Yes, for it was he himself who told me about it."

"Jove!" exclaimed the husband of a Social Leader; "that was an awful situation!"

Ellis Tucker heaved a sigh. "So the bees kept the boat and the Yankee took the water."

The Partially Reformed Drunkard nodded.

"And the humming," continued Ellis Tucker, in a reflective tone, "gets louder day by day, in the tenements and factories."

The Partially Reformed Drunkard blew a ring of tobacco smoke toward the ceiling. "Speaking of the millennium, I suppose you know, Senator, that the final and everlasting disgrace the poor man most dreads, and from which all his friends try their best to save him, is a pauper's grave a pauper's burial in the Potter's Field?"

"Yes, we all know that."

"Well, do you happen to know what proportion of the inhabitants of gay New York, in these golden days of fatness and brotherly love, are buried in paupers' graves?"

"Well, perhaps one in two hundred."

"Try again."

"One in five hundred," guessed the Promising Youth of Sixty-five.

"It happens," said the Partially Reformed Drunkard, "to be one in every ten of us."

"Absurd!" exclaimed the Senator.

"It *is* absurd," said Ellis Tucker, "but it's correct, as I happen to know."

"What socialist gave you those figures?" inquired the Senator.

"You don't believe it?"

"Of course I don't."

Ellis Tucker, in a lower but audible tone, remarked to the Partially Reformed Drunkard: "Of course he doesn't. If he believed it he would be false to his trust."

The Partially Reformed Drunkard smiled and inquired in the same tone: "To which trust do you refer?"

A flush of anger came into the senatorial visage. But the Promising Youth of Sixty-five, to whom poverty and other degrading vices were repugnant, hastened to change the subject. "By the way, is there any news of Stockton?"

Ellis Tucker shook his head. "Nothing."

"Most extraordinary affair," said the Promising Youth of Sixty-five. "And they say he was driven off in his own carriage."

Ellis Tucker sank lower in his voluminous armchair and closed his eyes. "Well, that is one of

the mysteries of the case. His two coachmen and five grooms—everybody at his stable, in fact—all swear that it was not one of his own carriages."

"They ought to know."

"Ye-es. They certainly ought to know. And they probably *do* know. But the family think it *was* his own carriage."

"Ah?"

"Really?"

The husband of a Social Leader leaned forward. "But—if er who else would be likely to know?"

"His own son happened to be looking out the window as his father entered the carriage. He is a horsey young man, spends a good deal of time at the stable, knows all the coachmen, horses and whole outfit intimately. He swears that he recognized the second coachman and even names the two horses that were hitched to the carriage."

"But it was at night."

"There is a lamp-post just in front of the house."

"Of course!"

"But, tell me, Tucker," said the husband of a Social Leader, "what does the indoor man say—the one who went out and held the umbrella over Stockton? *He* must have noticed whether it was their own turnout or not."

"Pretends he didn't."

The Senator whistled softly, to show that even *he* was mystified.

The Promising Youth of Sixty-five straightened up and spoke in a lower tone. "Look here; somebody or other in such a crowded neighborhood could testify as to whether a carriage left the Stockton stable that evening."

"But not as to the exact number of vehicles. You see, Mrs. Stockton had gone to the opera and the daughter had been taken to a dinner, so there were several carriages going in and out."

"What do *you* think, Tucker?"

Ellis Tucker waited a moment until the Websterian waiter was out of hearing.

"I think the stable people are all lying; that Stockton was betrayed by his own servants."

The husband of a Social Leader frowned. "Do you mean to say that this murdering conspiracy has crept into our homes—among our own servants?"

Ellis Tucker nodded. "That's what Payson was just saying. Wasn't it, Payson?"

Payson, leaning comfortably back in his deep chair, his chin upon his breast, seemed more asleep than awake.

"Let him alone," said the Partially Reformed

Drunkard. "After his recent experience he is entitled to a little sleep."

The Senator looked at his watch and rose to his feet. "Six o'clock."

"Jove!" exclaimed the Promising Youth of Sixty-five. "I must hustle home, dress and be at Tenth Street by half-past seven."

As the other men moved toward the door, Tucker, whose house was near Payson's, looked down at his friend, then touched his arm.

"Coming, Payson?"

The sleeper paid no attention to the summons, and Tucker gave the arm a little shake. "Wake up, old man. Time to toddle."

Still no reply; and Ellis Tucker, after a harder shake, stooped down, peered up into his friend's face and touched one of his motionless hands. Then, with an exclamation of alarm, he called back the departing men.

George Payson, deaf to human voices, was sleeping his last sleep. Mr. Fowler's threat had proved more than idle words.

While friends of Payson, after summoning a doctor, moved silently about through the front rooms of the club and held whispered consultations, a similar but less tragic scene was passing in the

servants' quarters. The Websterian waiter, after emptying what remained of Mr. Payson's whisky and soda, carefully rinsed the glass, although this was not one of his usual duties, nor expected of him. As he turned about and started toward the steward's office he staggered into the arms of another waiter, and fainted. Being a strong man who had never fainted before, his friends were alarmed and mistook the unwonted pallor of his face for the hue of death. There was a sudden scurrying about and a call for the doctor now at Mr. Payson's side. But the Websterian Robert regained consciousness in a moment and was on his feet. His face, however, remained paler, and there was, at first, a look resembling terror in his eyes. But these eyes of infinite wisdom became serene again; and when his fellow servants inquired as to his feelings and the cause of the attack, he replied with the dignity of Solomon:

"Just a dizziness. I never had it before.'

Then he added, with the confidence of an inspired prophet:

"And I shall never have it again."

XIII

The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.
—*Wordsworth.*

WHEN Billy Chapman alighted before his own house he was startled by the sight of a figure standing upon the doorstep, and evidently awaiting him. Recent events had produced their effect upon his nerves. They had also prepared him for whatever might occur. His sudden bracing up for disaster, however, was relieved by the singular quality of the voice that greeted him from the waiting figure; a bass voice, so abysmally deep that it seemed to arise from a fathomless interior. Even in its lowest tones it was sonorous and resounding.

"Good evening, Mr. Chapman."

"Ah! It's you, Mr. Love," and they shook hands. "Come inside."

"No, thank you, Mr. Chapman, I would rather not, if you don't mind. I only want a word with you, and would prefer it here, if you can give me just a minute."

"Certainly; what is it?"

"I have a favor to ask."

"Well, you won't get it, Mr. Love."

Mr. Love, evidently surprised by this reply, took a backward step. Being very lame, with one leg shorter than the other, this backward step and the handling of his heavy cane was something of an undertaking. His surprise was obvious, even in the darkness.

"No, sir. And what's more, I will not even listen to your request until you give *me* a promise."

"What is it, Mr. Chapman?"

"That you will never again prevent your sister from coming to me for assistance, whether financial or any other kind. Never again, under any possible circumstances."

Mr. Freeman Love uttered a sound—something between the lowest string of a bass viol and the growl of a grizzly—which was, in reality, a surpressed exclamation of relief. It was also in the nature of a friendly laugh.

"But, Mr. Chapman, you have done so much for both of us, that really—I"——

"That has nothing to do with it. Your sister was a mother to me for years, and almighty critical years they were, too. And if any person, brother or otherwise, comes between us and prevents my

helping her when I feel like it—why, he is no friend of mine nor of hers either."

"Well, sir, if you feel that way about it, of course I will not interfere."

"You promise? You give me your word on it?"

"Yes."

"Good! Now, what can I do for you?"

"Reconsider a decision. Reconsider your refusal of this afternoon to subscribe to the People's League."

It was Billy Chapman's turn to take a step backward. In dumb surprise he regarded his companion. There was a brief silence.

"How in the devil did you know it?"

"Well, sir; I—I heard"——

"But the thing only happened an hour ago!"

"Yes, I know, but some one told me."

"Fowler?"

"No."

Billy tried to scrutinize Mr. Freeman Love's face, but he received little assistance from the neighboring street lamp.

"Are you mixed up with this People's League?"

"In a way."

"Good work! My congratulations!"

Mr. Love made an impatient gesture. "Let us

not discuss that. I have come to you to-night, Mr. Chapman, to beg you to change your mind. Pay this money, which is nothing to you, and save your own life."

"Mr. Love, in the first place I have agreed with a friend not to do it, and I shall not go back on my promise. Secondly, I should not do it anyway, as the whole principle is too damnably rotten and high-handed to be discussed. And there's an end to it."

"But, Mr. Chapman. Listen! This is a matter of"——

"Excuse me. I do not care to listen." And Billy pressed his door-bell.

"As a personal favor to me, Mr. Chapman— not that I have any right to ask it, but will you not think this over? Why throw away a valuable life? You have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Think it over. Please think it over."

"I will take my chances, Mr. Love, with the other victims. Is this your only business with me to-night?"

Mr. Love's voice struck a deeper bass than usual as he exclaimed:

"But good God! isn't that business enough?"

The front door was opened by a hand within and the two men stood in a strong light.

"Won't you come in?" And Billy, with a movement of a hand, emphasized the invitation.

"No, sir, thank you. But—but, won't you please reconsider?"

Billy's only reply was a shake of the head.

"Well, Mr. Chapman, I am very sorry. Good-night."

"Good-night."

And Mr. Love limped away in the snow.

The fact of a prepossessing trained nurse being always included in Billy's visits to his aunt's chamber might explain his feeling of resentment when informed that the official object of his attention was asleep. Telling a servant to notify him when the slumbering aunt returned to consciousness, he wandered for a few moments in a half-sulky mood through certain apartments of his splendid home.

But the ancient aunt, with no malicious design, had just fallen into a sound and enduring slumber. Catherine Wilson by her side, weary with reading aloud, had closed the book. Her hands in her lap, with head against the back of her chair, she allowed her own eyes to close. The Juno-like but sensitive face showed signs of fatigue. Her sleep, the night before, had been repeatedly inter-

rupted; for her venerable patient was habitually nervous through the hours of darkness. Conversationally, she was at her best between two and four in the morning. This belated and much needed sleep that now came to the trained nurse was the result of sheer exhaustion. The flush in her cheeks, while becoming, was a herald of evil things; the forerunner of a fever now afflicting many residents of New York; one of those periodic visitations which doctors call the "grip." And that afternoon the medical gentleman who dosed the Chapman household had impressed upon Miss Wilson the necessity of going to her own bed, and at once, before the fever should develop further. These instructions she promised to obey. Her own symptoms, with the knowledge from experience with others, all gave clearest warning of the coming illness.

Now, the dark eyes were hardly closed before she, too, drifted away into a sound sleep, even deeper than that of her companion.

Exceeding narrow is the borderland between reality and dreams. So narrow, so very narrow and undefined, that the one easily mingles with the other. On first awaking, and sometimes even later, we are still in doubt. So, with this weary nurse took place the thing that always fills us with

a gentle wonder; the experience that has come to most of us, but rarely from causes so unexpected or with results so real. Things long forgotten come trooping forth, in the land of dreams, from the distant recesses of our memory that most unfathomable of all human mysteries. A power beyond our own control unlocks the portals of those hidden chambers, and then, what unremembered things stand clearly forth! These vivid events in which we take so active, yet so helpless a part, where we live through interminable periods, have, we are told, only the duration of a waking instant.

Catherine Wilson was again a child. In the moonlight, along a country highway, she marched wearily with aching feet, hand in hand with a disconsolate father. A great, round moon, slowly rising, threw elongated shadows, somber and distorted, along the road before them. In this dream, all sights and sounds and all her own sensations, perhaps from the fever in her brain, were clear and vivid as any experience in her waking life. From a neighboring marsh came the dirge of frogs; and to her nostrils the damp, fresh odor of an autumn evening, with the smell of apples from a near-by orchard. She could see a house, very white in the moonlight, standing back from the road, among

trees that seemed almost black. From the porch came thrummings on a banjo, with snatches of a song. But on, and on and on they tramped, she and her father, many thousands of miles it seemed. And she, trying vainly to forget her weariness and the aching feet, hummed a song—a plaintive little melody taught her by a mother whose recent death was passionately mourned. Then, as we hear in dreams, she heard, at last, away ahead of them, in the shadowy distance of the night, far, far away at first, but coming nearer, mingling with the moonlight and the soft September air, the song that she herself was singing. A man's voice; clearer she heard it, clearer and fuller, until at last all things about her, the white road, the dark trees, the moon itself, all faded away, and with them the father by her side. And through it all, as if dispelling the scene of which it was itself a part, the voice became too real for any dream and her eyes opened. Then, like a startled spirit between two different worlds, she drew a hand across her eyes and stood upon her feet.

The voice, now a living voice, still reached her ears. Surely she was awake: yet the song continued. Bewildered, she looked for reassurance at the venerable aunt slumbering peacefully on

the couch; then around her at the luxurious chamber of the Chapman's, and through the windows at the falling snow without.

Yes, she was certainly awake. But the song, and by the same voice that sang it that historic night long years ago, hovered in the air, faintly and from a distance, but a reality.

Gliding from the chamber she leaned for an instant over the baluster in the hall, then hastened down the stairs with eager steps until she stood at the open door of the music room. In the dim light of this room, a spacious apartment in gray and gold, sat Mr. William Chapman at a piano, his face uplifted, his eyes closed, the last notes of this cherished ditty of her childhood, heard but once since her mother's death, dying upon his lips.

XIV

And to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him.—*Byron.*

WITH face transfigured, with eager eyes and parted lips, she stepped into the room and moved toward the singer.

Billy, his fingers on the keys, turned at the sudden apparition.

"Mr. Chapman! You?" she murmured.

Billy arose, with a slight but deferential inclination, as he would have acknowledged the presence of a princess. In his cheerful face had come a look of mild surprise, for the agitated bearing of his visitor foretold, at least, unusual tidings.

"Please tell me where you learned that song?"

"The last one?"

"Yes, the last one."

Before replying, Billy came a step or two nearer for a better view, in the uncertain light, of his questioner's face. She was bending forward, her eyes fixed eagerly upon his own; and it seemed to

Billy that he had never beheld a more interesting presence.

The dark eyes, the classic features, the low forehead—which had always reminded him of Greek or Roman maidens seemed now an idealized but breathing goddess, some mythological heroine Ariadne, Psyche, Helen of Troy or a Vestal Virgin.

"Tell me," she insisted, "where did you learn it?"

"Why, I have known it for a long time—a good many years."

"Yes, but where did you get it? and when?"

"Oh, twenty years ago, when I was a student at Cambridge."

"But how did you come to know it?"

As he met the anxious eyes fixed appealingly, yet joyfully, upon his own, he was perplexed for the briefest instant by a vague consciousness of having studied them before, at some far away period. Or was it some previous existence? But this glimmer of memory may have come, perhaps, from the fading echo in his brain of the song he had just been singing. For, between the song and the eyes there seemed a vague, indefinable relation.

"I really have forgotten. It's several years

since I have thought of it. I don't know why I happened to be singing it just now."

"Yes, yes ! But from whom did you get it ?"

"Why—I don't remember. I suppose I must have heard somebody sing it."

"Who ?"

"Really, I can't remember. I knew a lot of songs once. Picked them up anywhere."

"But this one can't you recall where you first heard it ? Please try."

Billy tried. He closed his eyes and stroked his forehead. He also hummed the air of the song, as if that might help him. But the intervening years, rich in memories of an active career, had obliterated all impression of what had never been to him an important episode.

He opened his eyes and looked again at the earnest face with its appealing eyes and flushed cheeks. She was bending eagerly forward as if his answer were a matter of life or death. He smiled at her almost tragic insistence.

"But why does it interest you so much, that particular song ?"

"Oh, I must know! You *must* recall! Surely you have some remembrance."

But Billy shook his head slowly, his eyes looking smilingly into her own. For the study of

the face before him was infinitely more interesting than any song he had ever learned or was ever likely to learn.

She understood the look, and drew back a step. With a yet deeper flush in her cheeks, but with undiminished earnestness and a protesting, impatient little movement of her hands, she exclaimed:

"Please put your mind on it, Mr. Chapman, I entreat you! It is of the greatest importance —to me."

"That song?"

She nodded, her eyes still earnestly upon his face.

Billy became more serious and slightly embarrassed. Coming one step nearer:

"Miss Wilson, please believe me when I say there is nothing on this earth I would not do for you. Nothing; absolutely nothing. I will try later to remember about the song, but now there is something I wish so much to tell you"——

"No, no! The song first! Oh, please! The song before everything. Was it taught you by—by a little girl?"

"Possibly."

"Oh, try and remember! By a little girl, on a moonlight night not far from Cambridge?"

Billy retreated a step, to his old position, and leaned against the piano. Into his face had come a shade of disappointment or annoyance.

"Please try," she pleaded. "You *must* remember. On a country road at night? Did not you meet two people, a man and a girl, and the girl sang it for you?"

Billy straightened up. "Why, of course! That's it exactly! Near Cambridge. A thousand years ago, when I was a student. A girl with her father."

"You do remember!"

"Of course I do! The girl sang it for me, and the man was"—— He hesitated.

"Just out of prison."

"Yes—poor chap! It was he who killed Rufus Dickson. And a good job, too."

"That was my father!"

"Then it was you who taught me the song?"

She nodded, her eyes moist, her lips quivering with suppressed excitement.

"Then we are very old friends!" he exclaimed. "For years I remembered that night distinctly, and am ashamed that I should ever have forgotten it."

"We have been searching for you ever since," she exclaimed. "But why did you give us a false address?"

"A false address?"

She smiled. "I suppose your name at that period was William Chapman?"

He nodded.

"Then why did you give my father a card with William Jones on it?"

"William Jones? Are you sure?"

"Very sure. We still have the card."

"Is that why your father asked me last night if I knew a William Jones?"

"Yes. For years he has been searching, inquiring and writing letters. He has interviewed at least a dozen William Joneses. But never the right one."

"Now, really," said Billy, with a slow shake of his head, "you must have made some mistake about that card. You kept the wrong one probably."

"No, indeed! It was the only one we had. There are figures on the back; equations and things, in a very fine hand."

Billy's eyes opened wider with a new light.

"Well, of all things!" he exclaimed. "I was counting on that card to pull me through an exam in mathematics. And I slumped. So that is what I gave your father. I wondered what on earth had become of the priceless thing. Why, it was my only hope of success."

"My father also treasures it. He always carries it in his pocket."

"Well, it is rather interesting, isn't it," said Billy with a gentle but more than friendly smile, "that as we were talking in the hall last night we formed the same group that stood in the moonlight on the Massachusetts highway, twenty years ago?"

"Isn't it!"

"Only the little girl is somewhat taller."

"And you will never believe, Mr. Chapman, how very glad and how thankful my father will be to know it. To find you has been the desire of his life. What you did that night was the turning point in his career. You saved him."

"Oh, no!" And Billy made a protesting gesture.

"Indeed you did! It was not only the money you gave, but your taking him by the hand and your sincere assurance of respect. He needed it then, poor man! I must send him a note this very minute." And she turned to leave the room.

"Just a minute. Since your father is so very grateful, do you think he would grant me a favor?"

"Indeed he would grant you anything!"

"Do you think he would give up—hand over

to me -the thing he values, perhaps, more than anything in the world?"

"I do."

"No matter what it was?"

"He would give you anything."

"And will you promise to use your influence in my behalf to help me get it?"

"Of course I will."

"Promise."

Something in Billy's manner, as he asked this last question, brought an inquiring look to Miss Wilson's eyes; and it brought more color to her cheeks.

"Promise." He repeated.

But Miss Wilson with a negative movement of her head, and with a faint smile answered, slowly:

"No. I—I am not—sure."

At a footstep in the hall, Billy turned. To a servant who appeared at the door he demanded:

"Well? What is it, Henry?"

"A telephone message from the Club, sir. I took it."

"Well?"

"It was from Mr. Tucker, sir. He wished me to tell you that Mr. Payson has just died, at the Club, sir, very suddenly."

For an instant Billy regarded the man in silence.

"Dead!" he whispered, "Payson dead?"

"Yes, sir. Just a few minutes ago. They found him unconscious in his chair. Heart disease, sir, or poison."

In silence Billy closed his eyes. Then he turned to Miss Wilson. She saw the changed expression, and in a voice tremulous with sympathy, murmured:

"Oh, he was your dearest friend!"

When the footsteps of the departing servant were followed once more by a silence in the hall, Miss Wilson was moving gently toward the door.

Billy extended a hand with a restraining gesture.

"Please wait a moment. Whatever your answer, I should not have said what I did. I had no right to ask you to be my wife. My friend's death has made clear to me just how selfish I was. If it is my good fortune that you do care for me, please try and forget it." With a smile he added: "A dead man—at least no decent dead man—would play such tricks with a woman he really loved."

A sudden pallor had come into her face. She spoke in a low, unsteady voice:

"You do not mean, Mr. Chapman, that—that you, too"——

"I mean that George Payson and I have re-

ceived the same message. My turn is coming next."

She came nearer, terror in her face, one hand against her bosom, the other quivering against her cheek.

"You don't mean from that awful Committee of Seven?"

Billy regarded her in surprise. "Why, how did you know about the Committee of Seven?"

"My father spoke of it last night, just before you came. But they have not threatened *you?* Not *you?*"

Billy nodded, and smiled.

"They have done me that honor."

"Awful! Awful!" she exclaimed. "Oh, impossible! How can it be?"

"I did not bring up the subject to pose as a martyr, but merely to explain myself. You see, I want, at least, your respect, and shall not be happy without it, dead or alive."

"Horrible!" she exclaimed more to herself than to him. "Wicked! Oh, incredible! I know now what he meant. He dared not tell me. It was you he had in mind!"

"Your father?"

She made no reply, but moved backward a step or two, and sank into a chair. With hands clasped

tightly in her lap she sat for a moment, her eyes moving from the floor up to Billy's face, then down and up again. Her own face was paler, and the anguish in her eyes caused him acute remorse.

"Please forget all about it," he said. "Don't let it trouble you, my little friend of the moonlight. I am heartily ashamed of myself."

She rose to her feet as with a sudden decision. For an instant her eyes met his, with a look he could not fathom at the instant. But he remembered it, and later he comprehended.

Then, without a word, she hurried from the room.

After this abrupt ending of the interview, Billy stood for a time in silent meditation. His thoughts soon returned to his departed friend. Then slowly, he crossed the hall to the telephone for further knowledge of the tragedy. And he breathed a sigh of relief on learning the family had already been notified. For, as George Payson's closest friend, he feared this painful duty might fall to himself.

After writing a note and sending it by a servant, he encountered, in coming from the library, the family physician who had just entered. Words of greeting passed, with comments on the blizzard,

still raging without, and the difficulty of travel. Billy inquired if his aunt's condition was any worse.

"No," replied the doctor. "She is well as ever. It is Miss Wilson who is causing me a mild anxiety to-day. I am afraid she is in for a fever."

Billy's surprise and anxiety were visible in his face. "That's too bad. I thought she seemed flushed."

"When did you see her?"

"Just a few minutes ago."

"Then you have been to her chamber?"

"No, down here."

The doctor frowned.

"Isn't she in bed?"

"She just went up-stairs."

"Foolish! She knows better than that. She ought to be in bed, and promised to go there this morning. I will go right up. Can you send word that I am here?"

Billy called to the man in the vestibule.

"Henry, just tell Miss Wilson that Doctor Blayne is here."

"Miss Wilson has gone out, sir."

Both men turned upon him in surprise.

"Gone out!" repeated the doctor.

Billy shook his head. "You are mistaken,

Henry. She was here a few moments ago. Just run up and tell her Doctor Blayne has come."

"But, sir, I beg your pardon, I just let her out myself."

Again the doctor frowned as he muttered, "In this storm! Is the girl crazy?"

"I warned her against it, sir. She slipped and nearly fell in the snow as she started off."

"Didn't she have a carriage?" Billy asked.

"No, sir. She said she couldn't wait."

"Couldn't wait for a carriage! Where was she going?"

"To the Madison Avenue car, sir."

"If I only knew where she had gone," Billy muttered, "I would go after her and bring her home. She is wild."

"Wild, yes. Wild, crazy, criminal—all those things. If she thought it her duty to swim the Atlantic she would start to-night. You know, perhaps, the sort of conscience that some women have?"

Billy was pacing to and fro. With an impatient gesture he snapped his fingers.

"I hate those damn fool consciences!"

Doctor Blayne smiled.

"Well, so do I. Would you mind telephoning me when she comes in, Mr. Chapman?"

"I will. But suppose she falls in the snow somewhere—what then? How can anybody get to her?"

Doctor Blayne studied for an instant the naturally cheerful face of this Crœsus, and saw the ill concealed distress in the eyes that met his own.

"Do not let that worry you, Mr. Chapman. She has strength—for to-night. Was she the same as usual this evening? Not abnormally nervous or excitable?"

Before replying Billy looked away for a moment, off into the dimly lighted music-room. He recalled her earnestness about the song, her joy in the discovery of the long-lost friend, and her subsequent reserve; also her sudden departure upon some impulse unrevealed to him.

"No, on the whole she was very sensible. Very sensible indeed."

Then, with an apology for his hasty departure, he slipped on an overcoat and hat and hurried from the house.

Meanwhile, the fugitive invalid, shivering from cold, yet burning with fever, was toiling through the storm in an agony of haste. Although with limbs trembling from weakness, and feeling at moments a disconcerting dizziness, her mind was never clearer. Nor was ever spirit more exalted, or purpose firmer.

XV

Oligarchy: A form of government in which the supreme power is placed in the hands of a few persons.

Republic: A State in which the sovereign power resides in the whole body of the people.

IN THIS snow-covered city, about three miles from Billy Chapman's residence, six men had come together on a business closely connected with certain figures in our drama.

Not a stone's throw from Washington Square, in the now neglected drawing-room of an aristocratic house, these citizens were assembled. The departing glories of the mansion appealed, at present, to heedless tenants. An elaborate ceiling with faded tints and clouded gold, the graceful capitals of supporting columns once white, now a grimy yellow; the empty niches in the corners of the room; the elaborately carved mantel of Italian marble —all were wasted upon the six earnest men now present. While the room, as a whole, was dimly lighted, with a somewhat funereal gloom obscuring its further corners, a

large table in the center was illuminated by a crystal chandelier directly above.

This chandelier, a glistening masterpiece of garlands and pendants, seemed like some aristocrat of the old regime, a silent but haughty protest against the deeds beneath. High up in the chimney piece, among the marble flowers, there was a monogram, the intertwining of an H and a C. These letters were the initials of Henry Chapman, the original owner of the mansion. His grandson, our William Chapman, at the instigation of a dissatisfied wife, had moved further up-town some fifteen years ago, when this quarter of the city had become less fashionable. Of the present uses of the building Billy Chapman was ignorant. According to information from his agents it was now used as an office building. Deeply outraged, however, would be the shades of its original occupants could they look down upon this handful of citizens here assembled and divine their mission.

It was the custom of this Committee to assemble each day, Sundays excepted, at three in the afternoon. The length of the sitting depended upon circumstances. As a rule, however, they lasted about three hours, but extended, on occasions, far into the night. Once or twice during sittings -

unless the matter in hand became too absorbing a short rest was taken for recuperation and informal intercourse. At the present moment, during one of these intermissions, five of the six members present had left the large table and were either standing or moving idly about the room. One, a Western Orator, his back to the open fire, his hands behind him, was speaking.

"The situation is pathetic. Most of these millionaires are good enough fellows. But they have no more tact than sharks about a shipwreck. They know and have known for years that the people are exasperated by the tariff. All they had to do was to loosen their grip on a cent or two here and there drop us a husk now and then. But, no; they couldn't quite come to it. It really seems harder for a rich man to give up a cent than for a poor man to lose a dollar. As for fanning the flames of revolt they beat the anarchist at his own trade. Even the most benighted peasants in Europe know enough to let the hogs have a truffle now and then, just to keep them digging and contented."

Another member, a Labor Leader, who stood beside him, nodded his approval. "And when they discourse before election about the dignity of labor and the glorious mission of the working

man I remember the donkey at the mines who drags the ore. He, too, has a glorious mission. But he seldom dies rich."

The Western Orator continued: "If this were a republic the people would have decided these matters years ago. But the United States Senate is faithful to its masters."

A former Professor of Political Economy, who was moving slowly to and fro across the room a man of heavy frame and large, clean-shaven, benevolent face—added pleasantly:

"The United States Senate bears about the same relation to the will of the people as Jack Frost to an early blossom."

"As for their masters," said the Editor of a Socialist Paper, sitting on the arm of a chair—a small, bald-headed man with an exceedingly stiff beard—"they will skim the cream from the outlying planets if we give them time enough. The Scotchman is a canny thing. The Jew has a reputation. But for wholesale appropriation of other people's funds, done in a nice, genteel, safe, dishonest and respectable way, they are girl babies compared with the American financier. As an exhibition of human greed being a continuous performance—it is almost worth the price."

"Yes," said the Professor, "if anything is worth that price.'

The large windows of this apartment looked upon the street; and the six men, during the pause that followed, listened to the wind without, beating the snow against the glass. The windows rattled, for they were not so tight as in former days. The Labor Leader threw more coal upon the fire, and poked it.

"These dusky diamonds," he said, "are splendid things for the owners of mines and railroads. And they are easy to get when you buy them by the ton. But people who get them by the basket pay a higher tax. It's death or diamonds with them, and not always diamonds."

"Well, why not?" inquired the Editor. "The poor are too much pampered. Freezing is cheap; and better than starving. Besides, business is business."

Another silence followed, broken by the Chairman of the Committee, still seated in his customary place at the end of the large table. The light from the crystal chandelier, coming directly from above, brought out in clear relief his square, strong head and regular features. It also accentuated a resemblance to certain ancient Romans. He was, in fact, a constant reminder to members of the

Committee and to others who knew him, of familiar portraits of Brutus, or Cato the Younger. In certain traits of character, also, he resembled those unpurchasable men.

Looking up from a document in his hand he spoke more in a tone of sorrow than of personal resentment. Judging from the close attention immediately given by the other members, his opinions were respected.

"But, of the many achievements of our millionaires there is one that surpasses all the others. We can understand their abnormal greed; their refusal to mitigate the tariff; their purchase of elections and their open contempt for the vanquished voter and his laws. We have become familiar with their quenchless thirst for money. No further selfishness of theirs can surprise us. But it is beyond my comprehension how men already rich can find amusement in selling polluted meat to unsuspecting friends. I say friends because they can hardly consider all mankind as enemies."

"Not all mankind, Mr. Wilson, only the common people," replied the Labor Leader. "This silent war between rich and poor has been on for years."

"But this is far more cowardly," continued Mr.

Wilson, "than any civilized war. It is not meeting the enemy on the field of battle; it is stabbing him through his wife and children. The poor are none too well nourished as it is. The laborer's hope is in his strength. And when capitalists sell him health-destroying garbage and take his hard-earned money in return, they place themselves in a class apart. It is a new development in civilization."

Across the room, and opposite the Chairman, a member of the Committee who was standing back to the wall, a heavily built man with a gray mustache, nodded a solemn assent. He was President of a Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. A few months ago he had lost a daughter, and the circumstances of her death were such that no canned meat had since been allowed in his family. As murmurs of assent were heard from other members of the Committee, the Engineer closed his eyes and remained silent.

"To be just to our enemy, the millionaire," said the Professor of Political Economy, "he has ceased to be a responsible being. He is as drunk with his money as Caligula with his power. So drunk that he cannot read the writing on the wall, and still snaps his fingers in our faces."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the Editor. "There is a paralyzing thought in that. Let us be thank-

ful the taste of these millionaires is for money, not for blood!"

While these words were spoken, one of the rosewood doors was opened to admit another member of the Committee. He closed the door behind him, removed his hat and overcoat and shook off the snow. Then, with the aid of his cane—for one leg was shorter than the other he moved to the table and dropped into his own chair.

As if waiting for his arrival the five men, the Orator, the Professor, the Editor, the Labor Leader and the Locomotive Engineer, came forward and took their seats at the table. As they did so an inquiring look from the Professor was answered by the newcomer with a negative movement of the head and a partial closing of the eyes. Another questioning glance from the Locomotive Engineer received similar recognition.

With the members of this Committee of Seven it was an honest conviction that they were saving the country from a sanguinary conflict—that by the sacrifice of a few lives they averted a vindictive uprising of the poorer classes. They knew from personal knowledge what the rich had refused to learn: that millions of citizens were exasperated by conditions that directed the bulk of the nation's wealth—the results of the laborer's toil—into the

already bursting coffers of their political owners. They realized now that the average voter was a helpless unit. That even in the selection of his owners his voice was unheard; that he was sold, tricked and outmaneuvered. They believed that the trusts, the corporations and these colossal fortunes, once a menace, had now become active and triumphant enemies.

Aside from collecting funds, it was the purpose of this Committee to pacify their millions of adherents until they had subdued the public enemy, the plutocracy, which already controlled the wealth and business of the country, the courts, the elections and the Senate. But, since the enemy had for years used any method, however corrupt, to attain its ends, this Committee of Seven had been formally empowered to meet the adversary on his own ground and, if necessary, with his own or any other weapons.

XVI

That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

—*Abraham Lincoln.*

WHEN the seven men were seated the Chairman was the first to speak. "I believe Mr. Love has something to report."

Whereupon, Mr. Love's voice, in its usual cavernous tones, came forth.

"I am sorry to say, sir, that Mr. William Chapman refuses to reconsider his reply of this afternoon. He will not contribute."

"Is that his final answer?"

"Yes, sir. He and Mr. Payson, it seems, had agreed to stand together; and Mr. Chapman will not go back on his word or even talk about it."

"Unfortunate," murmured the Professor.

Into Mr. Wilson's face came an expression of regret. "Yes, it is certainly unfortunate. Especially, as it leaves us but one course. Our duty is clear."

The Orator nodded. "Perfectly clear."

Two others, the Labor Leader and the Editor, also nodded.

"But, gentlemen," and Mr. Freeman Love's voice, while almost pleading, seemed even deeper in tone and more sepulchral than usual, "is not this case quite different from any of the others? Does not Mr. Chapman's record entitle him to more consideration than the ordinary millionaire?"

The Professor closed his eyes. "So it seems to me."

"He has always been a good friend to the poor," continued Freeman Love, "and has always stood up for the working man. Very few people in serious trouble ever appealed to him in vain. And we know what sort of tenements he has built on the East Side."

"Best things in the city," added the Professor.

"When somebody asked him," Mr. Love went on, "why he used so much space for elevators in cheap tenements he said he didn't see why there wasn't as much sense in lifting a poor man who had been working all day as a rich one who needed exercise."

The Labor Leader laughed. "Good enough! If more of them felt that way we seven might never have come together."

Freeman Love, from a rapid survey of the faces about him, knew that his words had produced an effect. He began to have hopes of the Labor Leader's conversion. In a voice of yet deeper bass, but with mellower tones, he ventured another statement. "Perhaps some of you knew about Blinky Hone, whose death was in all the papers this winter?"

"And he was the vilest old drunken brute," said the Editor, "of anybody's acquaintance—in or out of jail."

"Yes, I guess he was," and Freeman Love smiled a ready indorsement. "Well, years ago, before he went to the bad, he was coachman to Mr. Chapman's father, the man who built this house. People wondered why this present Chapman—Billy, as his friends call him—should like Blinky Hone. But he did. And he stood by him, through thick and thin, and looked out for his family—educated his children; made life easier for his wife and such things. At the old scamp's funeral the other day there were only three people. All the others were ashamed to be seen with him, probably, even when he was dead. The three who followed Blinky to the grave were his wife, his dog and Billy Chapman."

The Locomotive Engineer smiled, grunted and

stroked his chin. The Orator also smiled, but with a milder enjoyment of the narrative; and he glanced at the Chairman. Mr. Wilson, however, did not look at the Orator. His eyes had been resting serenely upon Mr. Love, and he made a slight movement of the head in appreciation of the story. Then he replied:

"Mr. Chapman is a kind-hearted man. But if we were governed solely by the domestic virtues of these men upon our list, and selected only those of whom no good can be said, this Committee would accomplish little."

"That's so," and the Editor was emphatic.

"It is not a question," continued Mr. Wilson, "of Mr. Chapman's personal character. We all know him to be a good man, exceptionally warm-hearted and generous. But with us it is a question of the future usefulness of this Committee. We are here to sacrifice everything to the cause we represent and to accomplish a certain purpose—and that purpose is of vital importance."

"But don't you think, Mr. Wilson," said the Locomotive Engineer, "that it is also our duty to consider the justice of an individual case? Do you think it right that a man should be put out of the world simply for keeping his promise to a friend?"

"It is his own choice," said the Editor. "When he made such a promise he knew what it meant."

Of this truth both the Orator and the Labor Leader murmured their recognition.

Freeman Love, partly to conceal his resentment — for he disliked the Editor—leaned back in his chair and looked up at the crystal chandelier above their heads. This luminary, he remembered, was also an old acquaintance of William Chapman—from his boyhood up.

Freeman Love's face was gloomy. He had reason to be anxious. From his knowledge of the men about him he felt that his candidate was lost. The vote against him would be four to three. However, he made another effort.

"As a committee we are not very popular. That, of course, we expected all along. But going too far in a case like this might do us more harm than good. The assassination of such a popular citizen could be regarded, even by our own party, as a needless and malicious murder. He has done more real good with his money than all the other millionaires put together."

"Perfectly true!" exclaimed the Professor of Political Economy with an emphatic movement of the head; "perfectly true! It might damage the cause irretrievably."

"No cause," spoke the Chairman, "is strengthened by a wavering policy. Our method is effective chiefly because there are no exemptions—because it is applied without fear or favor, regardless of the individual. We must place the success of the cause above all personal considerations. It is easy to foresee the effect upon our treasury if it once became known that Mr. Chapman or anybody else had refused to subscribe and had defied with impunity the People's League."

"The Chairman is right," said the Labor Leader. "The people, in their struggle against capital, have always failed for want of money. Money we must have. If we fail to get it our cause is lost."

"Yes, we must stick to our principles," added the Orator. "We have done well. We can be tenderhearted later on, when we are out of the woods."

Mr. Wilson, realizing the disappointment of Billy Chapman's three defenders, addressed them in a more conciliatory tone and with voice and manner of honest sympathy.

"You must remember, gentlemen, in justice to those of us who seem harsh to your friend, that his life is entirely in his own hands. He chooses to give it. We have no alternative. We take it or we repudiate our previous principles. Believe me,

if Mr. Chapman were my dearest friend I should vote against him."

In the silence that followed there was a certain solemnity. Both sides had been heard. The arguments were in. The discussion was over. Freeman Love said nothing, but his feelings were deep. Could he have saved his friend by resigning from the Committee, or by any other renunciation, he would gladly have done so. He knew, before he had consulted Mr. Chapman, that four members of the seven would vote against him. Now all further effort against this hostile and firm majority was waste of words. Sentence of death, in effect, was already pronounced against his best friend, the constant, unfailing benefactor of himself and his sister.

"Are we ready for the vote?" asked the Chairman.

Signs of assent came from the seven citizens around the table.

As they rose slowly, to walk over to the ballot-box, which stood upon a table against the wall, the janitor entered and, in a low voice, spoke a few words to the Chairman.

"Tell him I will see him in a few minutes."

"But he says at once, sir; this very minute. There's not a second to lose."

Mr. Wilson frowned. "Not a second to lose! Who is he?"

"I don't know, sir. He didn't have time to give his name."

The Professor, who was close to the speakers, turned with a smile. "Go ahead, Mr. Wilson. We are in no hurry, and he evidently is."

Mr. Wilson also smiled. "Well, if you will excuse me a moment."

As he stepped out into the hall and closed the door behind him he found himself face to face with Mr. William Chapman.

XVI

His tribe were God Almighty's gentlemen.
—*Dryden.*

IN THE dimmer light of the hall a few seconds passed before the Chairman recognized his visitor. On one occasion only, within twenty years, had they met, and that was the previous night in Mr. Chapman's own hall. There, also, the light was dim.

"Good-evening, Mr. Wilson. I am the bearer of a note from your daughter."

With a slight inclination of the head and a murmur of thanks the Chairman put forth his hand mechanically and received, without looking at it, the piece of folded paper.

This unexpected confronting of the man whose death he had so effectively hastened was causing a profound distress. Honesty was the basis of Mr. Wilson's character; and to accept, with cheerful face, the greeting of an unsuspecting friend whom he had condemned in secret seemed cowardly and hypocritical; a faithless assumption of

relations that did not exist. And so, as he involuntarily increased the short distance between them and stood with his back against the door, he acknowledged with formal civility the millionaire's greeting. But in the greeting came no sign of pleasure.

"I hope I am not disturbing important business, but your daughter insisted on my placing that note in your hands, and without delay."

"My daughter?"

"Yes. She had started out to come here, and you know what sort of a night it is."

Mr. Wilson nodded, politely, but as one whose attention wanders.

"I overtook her before she caught a car. She refused to return unless I promised to bring you a message. So, when we got back to the house she wrote that note in a hurry—and there it is."

Mr. Wilson, who had unfolded the note, turned his back more to the light, and read:

DEAR FATHER:

He is found!—the student who helped us—whom you have been seeking for twenty years. It is Mr. Chapman! And I know from what he tells me that he is doomed by that awful Committee of Seven.

Can't you—oh, can't you save him? CATHERINE.

Her father's eyes closed and the hand that held the note dropped slowly to his side. And to

Billy, who watched him carelessly, Mr. Wilson appeared to catch his breath. His head drooped slowly forward.

In the silence that followed he seemed, for a moment, to have forgotten his companion.

But Billy Chapman had something to say; and he said it in the manner of a man suppressing anger, in a low, even tone, carefully pronouncing his words.

"Mr. Wilson, I could not help guessing on the way down here at the contents of that note. If your daughter had wished me to know them she would have told me. So I prefer not to know. But from our conversation just before she started to come herself I believe its purpose is to influence you, or somebody else, in my behalf. Now, if your daughter is appealing to that Committee of Seven or any other body of conspirators she is doing it without my permission and most distinctly against my wishes."

Mr. Wilson made no reply, merely regarding the speaker with a serious, inscrutable face.

Billy went on: "This band of anarchists, Jack Sheppards, or whatever they may be, have already held up and murdered a few of my best friends. I stand with those friends, living or dead."

The Chairman made no reply.

"Your connection with that business I don't pretend to know. But from a word or two I just heard, unintentionally, as you opened the door, certain unpleasant suspicions were strengthened."

Mr. Wilson raised his head. In his tone was a shade of irony, as he replied calmly:

"I regret your very low opinion of my associates and myself."

Billy moved a hand with an impatient gesture. "My opinion may be of no importance, but my own actions I propose to control myself. I am not paying tribute to highwaymen of that stripe, neither am I courting their good-will and asking favors."

These words were emphasized by a somewhat contemptuous look, calmly returned by Mr. Wilson, whose eyes, undisturbed, rested serenely upon the speaker's face.

"If I have guessed the purpose of that note," continued Billy, "if the rendering of a trivial service twenty years ago is being used to influence either you or your companions in my behalf, it is done against my wishes; and I emphatically object."

As he finished he took a backward step, and buttoned his overcoat more closely about his throat.

"Am I perfectly clear, Mr. Wilson?"

"Perfectly clear, Mr. Chapman."

"Good-evening, sir."

"Good-evening."

Billy turned and walked away, descended the broad staircase where he had played as a child, passed out into the night and slammed the outer door behind him.

His resentment, as he pushed through the blinding storm toward the Madison Avenue cars, grew warmer with thought. It soon became anger of a deeper character than he often experienced. He was angry with Catherine Wilson for making him the bearer of a message that placed him in a humiliating position; angry with her father for his connection with assassins of his best friends; angry with himself for being the means of recalling a long-forgotten favor as a plea for pity—and with such a gang!

A sense of outraged pride and honor, of broken faith and cowardly treason—an unspeakable contempt for the role he had almost played—drove all else from his mind. Nearly an hour later, however, after still further reflection in an icy air—as the only passenger who faced the storm on the platform of the car—his thoughts were cooler.

He now recognized the probability that Catherine Wilson's knowledge of her father's business was no clearer than his own; that her only offense was a self-sacrificing effort to save the life of—Billy Chapman.

So, when he stepped off the car at the corner of his own street, there was something in his face that bore a faint resemblance to a smile. For in Billy's make-up were depths of serenity and good-will rarely disturbed by hate, and never for extended periods. Through the drifting snow he floundered to the pavement, ducking his head to protect his face from the storm. As he started along the narrow path, worn by feet of other pedestrians, he collided, gently, with a female figure. This person, obviously waiting for a down-town car, had tried vainly to step aside. Billy apologized, backing into a snow drift and yielding the right of way.

When his eyes encountered the woman's face, dimly lighted in the whirling snow by a neighboring street lamp, he uttered an exclamation:

"Miss Wilson!"

"Oh, Mr. Chapman! Did you give him the note?"

"Of course. Didn't I promise?"

"You placed it in his own hands?" And she leaned forward with a brighter, yet anxious face.

"Into his own hands. But what are you doing out here? You promised to stay in the house."

"No, I did not promise."

"But it was understood. Ah, I see! You were afraid I divined the contents of that note and would not deliver it."

With a slight elevation of the eyebrows, and the faintest smile, she turned away as if to avoid the storm. It was evident, however, that a weight had been removed from her mind as she inquired:

"What did he say when he read it?"

For an instant Billy hesitated, then decided that the present extraordinary circumstances her probable refusal to return to the house should she learn the failure of her letter—and his own unwillingness to permit any further effort in his behalf—all seemed to justify a benevolent falsehood.

"Oh, I don't remember exactly."

"But wasn't he surprised? Wasn't he very much pleased?"

"Yes; very much pleased."

"I knew he would be!"

With a light touch on her arm he turned her gently about. "So now we will go home."

Then, as a sudden gust drove the snow into their faces with stinging force: "This is a nice, cozy corner, but the house is even better."

A few minutes later they stood in the shelter of his own porch.

"You are out to-night on an angel's errand, Miss Wilson; a self-sacrificing effort to save my life. Whatever you have saved is yours. If I outlast this little epidemic of reform I can ask you to be my wife—instead of my widow."

Ignoring her attempt to withdraw the hand he had taken, he continued with a smile:

"Don't say 'no,' although if you do say it extinction might seem easier. Life would be a lonesome journey without you. So, be kind to me."

"Oh, don't ask me now, Mr. Chapman! Don't ask me to-night. Please don't!"

Her eyes, for an instant, were raised to his, lowered again, then turned away into the storm.

"You don't know, you do not realize, that perhaps my father is against all your friends."

"It needn't concern you and me. I don't mind that, if you don't."

"Oh, it is all too cruel and heartless! But he tells me nothing."

"But *you* are not cruel and heartless, unless you have no love for me. And that answer I shall never accept."

When the door opened, Catherine Wilson, with a new expression in her eyes—the soft light of a

great joy, with the pain of an overshadowing sorrow hastened to the rooms above. Joy prevailed over sorrow, for she knew her father; and she knew his unalterable devotion to the friend in need of twenty years ago.

Billy, on the other hand, enjoyed a gloomy satisfaction in having defeated the purpose of the note he had delivered to her father. And he was ready for the end.

While Catherine Wilson kneeled by her bed, her face in her hands, the subject of her prayer in the library beneath was carrying out a resolve he had imparted to George Payson that afternoon—writing a codicil to his will.

XVIII

How long halt ye between two opinions?
—*Kings.*

WHEN Billy, from his ancestral mansion, went out into the storm, Mr. Wilson was still standing before the door of the Committee room, a motionless figure with eyes closed.

The inward conflict was sharp, but brief. It had come, this issue, as a challenge without warning—solemn, momentous, commanding, to be answered now—and here.

His six companions, when he returned, were moving idly about the large table. Those who knew him best thought the Chairman's face had undergone a change within the last ten minutes. It seemed a sadder face, more weary and with lines about the mouth. With his straight, full neck, his Roman head and regular features, he recalled at this moment certain classic heroes of tragedy; possibly those, who for a worthy cause, found joy in sacrifice.

In his customary voice he resumed the interrupted business: "We were about to vote, I think."

"On the question of releasing Mr. William Chapman," said the Editor, who acted as secretary. "Those in favor of removing Mr. Chapman's name from the list will vote 'yes.' Those opposed will vote 'no.'"

Then the Chairman went over to the smaller table, took a marble from a wooden cup, inserted his hand in the ballot-box and deposited his vote. He was followed by the other members, each dropping his marble in the box. The Professor, the Engineer and Freeman Love went through the ceremony as a matter of form, being three against four, and knowing that Chapman was doomed.

These marbles were all the same color. But when a hand was inserted in the box a slight turn of the wrist deposited the vote either to the right for "Yes" or to the left for "No," a movement whose direction was known only to the holder of the marble. For, in this Committee, ballots on vital questions were secret. And it was the unwritten law that no questions should be asked, that the privacy of the personal vote should be respected. Many and obvious were the reasons

for not holding the individual responsible for the grim deeds of this assembly.

The Editor pulled out the little drawer with its two compartments and held it toward the light, in view of his companions. As he studied it more closely, to announce the verdict, a mild astonishment came into his face. He gave the drawer a shake as if doubting his eyes. But, after a swift glance at his fellow members, as one who seeks the solution of a mystery, he announced in a businesslike tone the result of the ballot:

"Four votes for the release of Mr. William Chapman. Three votes against it."

Mr. Freeman Love, the Professor and the Locomotive Engineer showed plainly in their faces surprise and joy. The Labor Leader, the Editor and the Orator sent inquiring glances about the table in a swift, instinctive effort to recognize the voter who had so suddenly changed his mind. The effort was unsuccessful. They looked only into one another's faces, the Chairman, of course, being above suspicion. The sincerity of his own recent arguments was unquestioned.

In fact, it was owing to Mr. Wilson's extraordinary—almost abnormal—honesty, to his inflexible devotion to the people's cause, that he had been given this most responsible office.

Of all present he alone showed neither surprise nor curiosity. Preserving his usual dignity and a somewhat stoical indifference, he resembled, even more than usual, Brutus and Cato.

In his customary tone, with no indication of disappointment, he said calmly:

"Such being the decision of this Committee, the Secretary will act accordingly and see that the proper persons are at once notified."

Then each of the seven members took his pen, and the name of William Chapman was stricken from the list.

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